

"Honor Bound"

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. IRAQI BATTLEFIELD - DAY

SUBTITLE: MARCH 2003 - OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

Plumes of dust trail tanks and armored personnel carriers as American forces race into Iraq, routing Saddam Hussein's army. Following the main attack, a sand-colored U.S. Military Police HUMV -- a "Hummer" -- and a similarly painted five-ton Army cargo truck approach burned hulks of enemy tanks in the barren desert outside a small village.

A dead Iraqi soldier's body juts out of the turret hatch of one of the tanks, arms and torso bent stiffly like a charcoal mannequin. Another dead body, this one headless, lies face down in a brown pool of dried blood. The American vehicles slow as they pass the dead so the crew of G.I.s can get a closer look, then roll to a stop.

ERIN FUENTES

A 23-year-old Military Police sergeant in desert camouflage uniform sits in the passenger seat, reading a map and holding a radio handset. Her driver snaps a digital picture of the headless body through the window of the vehicle while another soldier half-dozes in the back seat. The soldiers have removed their helmets but not their body armor in the searing desert heat.

Fuentes and her crew have had four hours of sleep in the last two days, but she still exudes the air of quiet authority and confidence that has helped her move quickly up the ranks. Erin looks at the DRIVER of the five-ton truck in her side rear view mirror. The driver takes a drink from a bottle of water while the NAVIGATOR in the passenger seat lights a cigarette. ANOTHER SOLDIER sits between the driver and navigator, napping. Erin gets out of the Hummer and walks to the driver's side of the truck.

ERIN

(to Driver)

Hold tight for a minute. I'm going
to see if we're in the right place.

The driver nods and keeps swigging water. Erin returns to her Hummer and picks up the radio handset to talk to her headquarters.

ERIN

Bravo-3-6, bravo-3-6, this is tango-
3-2, over.

The voice of ERIN'S COMMANDER crackles over the radio.

VOICE

(O.C.)

Bravo-3-6.

ERIN

Bravo-3-6, I've got no sign of
surrendering troops here. I'm at
hotel-romeo 2-4-4-8. Is that
right, is that the location we got
from the Cav?

VOICE

(O.C.)

Roger, hotel-romeo 2-4-4-8, say
again, hotel-romeo 2-4-4-8...

Erin looks up from her map as the nose cone of a Russian-made rocket-propelled grenade pokes out from behind a berm some 50 yards to her front right. Before Erin can react, the grenade jets from its launcher and slams into the five-ton truck behind her.

Silence, or rather, a ringing in the ears from the deafening grenade explosion. The right side of the truck is engulfed in flames. The navigator and much of the seat he occupied are gone. The soldier who napped just seconds ago follows the driver out the left side of the truck cab; they both stumble to the ground in a blind panic.

Just as Erin has practiced in countless combat drills, she bails out of the Hummer, hits the ground, and rolls into a firing position beside the vehicle. She calls out to her comrades in a seemingly muffled voice,

ERIN

Target, eleven o'clock!

THE HUMMER CREW

Though they can't hear Erin's command, SPECIALIST JENKINS and PRIVATE PONCE leap into action. Erin lays down suppressive fire with her rifle. Ponce pops out of the top of the Hummer to man the roof-mounted machine gun. Jenkins jumps out of the driver's seat and takes cover. They all fire at the unseen enemy.

Jenkins rakes the berm in front of him with semi-automatic rifle fire. He lies prone on the opposite side of the vehicle and shouts under the truck to Erin:

JENKINS

What are we shooting at?

Erin can't make out Jenkins words, but understands nonetheless. She yells at the top of her voice, hoping Jenkins can hear her, and points to the enemy position.

ERIN

Over there -- I saw the RPG.
There!

THE ENEMY

Suddenly several IRAQI SOLDIERS in civilian clothes run from behind the cover of the berm toward another covered position while others fire at the Americans. Bullets puncture the glass of the Hummer and kick up small plumes of dust around the M.P.s.

Bullets hum like bees past Erin's head. She draws up and returns fire, rolls out of her position, and rushes forward for better cover on her side of the berm.

Ponce sweeps the enemy positions with machine gun fire, but an Iraqi shoots him in his left shoulder; Ponce slumps forward in the turret.

Surprised that Ponce has stopped firing, Erin looks back to see him wounded, possibly dead. She runs back to the truck and grabs Jenkins to make sure he can hear her.

ERIN

Jenkins! Ponce's down! Check him
out and get on the gun! I'll cover
you!

Jenkins gets up and scrambles back into the Hummer to help Ponce as bullets hit the vehicle and the ground around him. An enemy bullet punctures one of the Hummer's tires, causing the vehicle to sag as the tire deflates with a loud hiss.

Erin fires the rest of her clip at the enemy to protect Jenkins. She releases the empty magazine from her rifle, slaps a fresh one into the magazine well, and loads a round into the chamber.

Erin pauses a moment, tries to catch her breath, and looks for targets over the sights of her rifle. The Iraqis are on the move, trying to flank her position. She can't let that happen.

Erin takes a quick final glance at her team. Jenkins eases Ponce down into the Hummer. The five-ton driver cowers behind the Hummer, hoping the enemy won't find him. The other survivor from the truck sits in the open, trying to wipe blood from a big gash on his forehead out of his eyes. Erin's on her own.

Erin makes a dash around the side of the berm to a position behind the enemy. She crouches down, winded, and checks to make sure she's behind good cover. Erin's hands shake as she pulls a bullet-shaped grenade from the bandoleer across her chest and loads it into the grenade launcher attached under the barrel of her rifle.

Erin edges her face around the side of the berm to find about 15 Iraqi soldiers poised to rush her comrades. One of the Iraqis hoists the reloaded rocket-propelled grenade launcher to his shoulder, ready to finish the Hummer and the rest of her men.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A U.S. ARMY BASE - DAY - 1999

In a flashback, the Iraqi fighters have become dark green silhouette targets at different distances on a rifle range in a clearing in the woods somewhere in the American South. Basic training recruits on the firing line -- dressed in green, brown, and tan woodland camouflage uniforms and helmets -- drop targets with their shots, but when the 19-year old Erin fires her rifle, none of the silhouettes fall.

Six Army drill sergeants strut up and down the line, carefully judging the recruits' firing technique and watching targets drop in the distance. One of the drill sergeants stands in a wooden tower operating the mechanical silhouette targets that pop up at varying distances on the range.

Frustrated and anxious, Erin finishes firing from her cement foxhole on the firing line, quietly but quickly clears the weapon, and places it beside her foxhole.

Erin stands motionless, eyes on the targets downrange, trying to avoid the sergeants' attention. No luck: the toughest, loudest of the lot marches toward her foxhole.

THE SENIOR DRILL INSTRUCTOR

MASTER SERGEANT TROY HARRIS, a tall, imperious black man in a Smokey Bear hat, sunglasses, and crisply pressed camouflage fatigues, looks downrange as he crouches next to Erin.

HARRIS

Private Fuentes, you are killing a whole lot of earthworms, but you are not even scaring the enemy. Now what's going on?

ERIN

I don't know, drill sergeant. I just can't seem to hit anything. I'm just not good at this.

HARRIS

(quietly)

Problem is, Fuentes, I know that's not true. I've seen you fire the weapon at paper targets and hit the bulls-eye nine times out of ten. You're a very good shot, Fuentes, one of the best I've ever seen. Until now. Now I'm thinking maybe the problem is these silhouettes. Maybe you haven't wanted to think about shooting at a person, been putting it out of your mind.

Erin turns to look at him; she tries not to betray her emotions. Harris recognizes the look on her face. He drops to one knee to get closer to the soldier in the foxhole and softens his voice in a way Erin has never heard until now.

HARRIS

It's all right, it's all right, I understand. Fuentes, I want you to listen to me now. I know since y'all got to boot camp I've been yelling at you privates day and night. I'm not going to yell at you now.

Harris removes his glasses and his hat. His voice lowers almost to a whisper.

HARRIS

Fuentes, I don't care what anybody tells you, all of us soldiers at one point or another have to ask ourselves if we can kill another person. And you just don't know, can't know if you can pull the trigger until the time comes. What you have to remember, what will help you when you have to decide, is that in combat, the enemy is trying to kill you and your friends. It's not murder; it's not just self-defense, either. If you don't stop the enemy, he will kill or injure your friends. And the best way to stop him is to put that round smack in the target's center of mass. Remember that, and you'll be fine. You think you can do that, Fuentes?

ERIN
I'll try, drill sergeant.

HARRIS
Don't try, private. Do it. Now
let me see you hit those targets.

Erin manages a weak smile and nods agreement.

HARRIS
(To Range Control Tower)
Can we put 'em back up, please?

Harris stands up, replaces his shades and hat, slipping back into his stern drill sergeant persona.

HARRIS
(to Erin)
Go on, private, lock and load.

Erin picks up her rifle, then a magazine. She pushes the magazine home, charges her weapon, then leans into the sandbags at the edge of her foxhole and looks downrange over the sights of the gun.

RANGE OFFICER
(O.C., over a PA system)
Firers, watch your lanes.

A target pops up 50 yards downrange. Erin finds the target in her sights, takes a deep breath, and lets it out half way. The round peep sight frames the pop-up silhouette target, while the front sight post lines up on the silhouette where a man's chest would be. This picture seems to squeeze out everything else in Erin's world.

HARRIS
Center mass, Fuentes; aim right at
the center...

Erin's finger squeezes the trigger. The weapon fires, the spent brass bullet casing flies out of the side of the rifle. The target drops in the distance as the recoil spring slams the next round into the chamber. Another target comes up, this time at 100 yards. Erin lays her sights on the target and fires. Another hit. More targets, at different ranges. One shot, one drop.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. IRAQI BATTLEFIELD - DAY - 2003

The harsh desert glare contrasts with the forest setting of the rifle range.

Erin aims and fires the grenade at the Iraqi soldiers, killing several and stunning the rest. The man with the RPG flops over dead. As he does he fires the RPG into the ground and kills more of his comrades, who fall in a cloud of cordite and dust.

Injured and dazed Iraqis run in different directions. Erin seizes on the confusion. She takes aim and begins to fire methodically, calmly at the enemy, one shot, one kill. Through Erin's rifle sights, the soldiers drop as the silhouette targets did before. The air cracks with each deadly shot.

As the remaining enemy troops begin to realize where the attack is coming from, Erin rushes them, firing precise bursts of automatic fire. She comes around the back of a mound of earth, chasing the panicked Iraqis, when she encounters what looks like a dozen or more enemy fighters.

ERIN

Drop your weapons! Hands up! [NOTE:
Repeats herself in Arabic after a
beat]

The enemy soldiers do as Erin commands: they throw their weapons down and put their hands in the air. Erin pivots back and forth; she keeps the soldiers in her sights, breathing heavily. Erin backs up to the relative shelter of the mound she just passed, ready to fire if the Iraqis resist.

ERIN

Lay down! [Repeats herself in
Arabic] Face down! Do it now!

The fighters comply. Jenkins comes up quickly to join Erin.

ERIN

(yelling to Jenkins)
Secure them; pat them down for
weapons. I'll cover you. How are
Ponce and the guys from third
platoon?

JENKINS

(also yelling)
I put a field dressing on him. I
think he'll make it, but we gotta
medevac him soon. I think he's in
shock. Rogers is dead, I'm pretty
sure. I found his leg. The other
two are cut up but probably OK.

Jenkins walks forward, shaking, picks up the weapons of the captured Iraqis, and places them in a pile out of their reach. The weapons of the dead and wounded will have to wait until later.

Erin trembles as she switches magazines on her rifle. She pulls and releases the M-16's charging handle, loading a fresh round in the chamber. She presses the talk button of the radio microphone on her shoulder harness without looking away from the prisoners.

ERIN
(into radio)
Bravo-3-6, this is tango-3-2, over.

VOICE
(O.C.)
Bravo-3-6...

ERIN
Contact with enemy platoon; about
10 enemy dead, five wounded, 20
POWs...One friendly dead, two
wounded...Need immediate medevac
and support, over.

VOICE
Roger, I'm on the way with two
squads to back you up. Hang tight
till we get there, over.

ERIN
Roger, 3-2 out.

Jenkins finishes checking the prisoners for weapons, backs up, and covers the Iraqis with his rifle. He gives Erin a nod. Only then does she feel it's safe to run back to check on her men. Erin starts with Ponce, who is lying beside the Hummer with a blood-soaked bandage on his shoulder and covered with a blanket. Ponce's face is ashen; he is barely conscious.

She runs quickly to the men from the five-ton, which is being consumed by fire. The driver is still curled up against the rear of Erin's Hummer, hiding.

ERIN
(yelling)
Hey, Bensen, hey, come on, it's
over! Are you OK? Are you hurt?

The soldier just tightens up in a ball, trying to shut the world out.

ERIN
OK, just don't go anywhere. Help's
coming.

The other surviving soldier still sits in the open,
apparently in shock. Erin walks up to him and takes his
hand. The man recoils in fear.

ERIN
(yelling near his ear so
he can hear)
It's OK, it's OK, it's Sergeant
Fuentes. You're safe. It's over.
Come here with me.

Erin helps the man to his feet and leads him to sit near
Ponce in the shade by the side of the Hummer. She examines
the man's wounds. He has his eyes, already caked with blood
from the cut in his forehead, squeezed shut.

ERIN
Hey, can you open your eyes? It's
OK now.

SOLDIER
I can't. It hurts too much.

Erin takes out her canteen.

ERIN
All right, I'm going to wash your
face off a little bit, OK? Just
look up a little for me.

She pours water over the man's shut eyelids, and as the caked
blood washes off, more oozes out of his eyelids and the rest
of his face. The blast peppered him with glass shards from
the truck's windshield, and there's nothing more she can do
right now.

ERIN
OK, go ahead and keep your eyes
closed. Have a drink of water,
right here.

She puts the canteen in his hand, and he takes a long drink.

SOLDIER
Thanks, Sergeant.

Erin crouches down between the two wounded soldiers and holds
their hands. She looks anxiously over her shoulder for signs
of friendly troops.

ERIN

Hang on, guys, chopper's coming.
You're going to be fine. Just hang
on.

U.S. REINFORCEMENTS

The sound of helicopter blades thumping in the distance tells Erin and her team that help is here. Jenkins ignites a green smoke grenade, and as a medevac helicopter lands and medics jump out, a pair of helicopter gunships swoop low to look for any sign of an enemy counterattack. The medics tend to the wounded and the shell shocked truck driver, and Erin backs away, relieved.

Erin returns to the battle site to support Jenkins and directs some of the medics to the enemy wounded. She now has a second to survey the scene. Erin can't take her eyes off the men she killed and those she wounded: the disfigured faces, tattered and bloody clothes, the squirming of maimed and dying men.

She deflates wearily as the adrenaline that has sustained her wears off. Erin turns, walks back to her vehicle, and vomits. She lifts her head as a medic puts Rogers' leg into a body bag; Erin wretches again.

THE PLATOON LEADER

Several HUMVs roar up, and more U.S. troops pour out of them to relieve Jenkins and Erin and set up a defensive perimeter. Another five-ton cargo truck follows behind to cart off the prisoners. Erin's platoon leader, LIEUTENANT JAMES, runs up to her. He notices that Erin looks pale and drawn.

JAMES

Excellent work, Sergeant Fuentes.
You can stand down now. Are you all
right?

Light-headed and short of breath from vomiting, Erin musters all her military discipline to give her report to the lieutenant. She looks past him as though she is still in the firefight. Her ears still ringing, she can't help but shout.

ERIN

Yes, sir, I think so. We ran into
an ambush, it was set up right over
there...I should have seen it
coming.

JAMES

Could have happened to anybody.
What matters is that you took
charge and fought it through. You
saved your men's lives.

ERIN

I got Rogers killed, I almost got
Ponce killed, I almost got all of
us killed. I was stupid. I should
have put out security when I
stopped --

JAMES

Listen, Fuentes -- Erin -- look at
me. Now, you did the right thing.
You took a bad situation and you
got your team out of it. OK? Now
I want you and Jenkins to get on
that medevac with your other men so
you can look after them. We'll get
your vehicle back.

ERIN

But sir, I haven't processed the
prisoners.

JAMES

You let me worry about that. Now
get on that aircraft. I'll talk to
you when I get back.

ERIN

Yes, sir.

Lt. James notices blood dripping from Erin's hand. He
touches her sleeve.

JAMES

Are you all right? Did you get hit
here?

ERIN

Where?

She turns her arm over to check for the source of the blood.
The elbow of her blouse is torn from her dive out of the
Hummer.

ERIN

Just a scrape, sir.

JAMES

All right, move out then. Have
that looked at by the medics.

ERIN

Yes, sir.

Erin grabs her bags out of the shot up Hummer and steps around a pool of Ponce's blood as she follows the medics carrying him to the helicopter. She catches herself before stepping on an unidentifiable chunk of human flesh near the five-ton, no doubt another piece of Rogers' scattered remains. Lt. James shakes his head as another LIEUTENANT approaches.

LIEUTENANT

What?

JAMES

She doesn't get it yet. She's
talking about how she fucked up.
Shit, she'll get the Silver Star
for this.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DESERT U.S. ARMY CAMP - DAY

Erin emerges alone from a sand-colored mess tent, dressed in desert camouflage but without her helmet, suspenders, or rifle. In place of the helmet she fits a camouflage cap over her pinned-up hair. She walks down a row of tents, one of many making up her division's rear headquarters.

ERIN'S BOYFRIEND

SERGEANT MARK CARPENTER, a handsome, athletic man in his early twenties, abruptly breaks off his conversation with one of his soldiers and jogs over to catch up with Erin.

Erin quickens her step away from the sergeant and pretends not to see him.

Carpenter speeds up as Erin makes a sudden turn down another row of tents. Carpenter loses track of Erin in the maze, then recognizes her gait and resumes the chase.

CARPENTER

Erin!

Erin pretends not to hear him and keeps walking. Carpenter closes on her until she can no longer plausibly ignore the man.

CARPENTER
Erin! Hey, wait up!

Erin turns to recognize Carpenter and slows her pace, but keeps walking. Carpenter catches up and they walk together.

ERIN
Sorry, I didn't hear you.

CARPENTER
(out of breath)
That's OK -- where you going?

ERIN
I'm running late for my appointment.

CARPENTER
Another one? You all right?

ERIN
I'm fine -- you know, I just don't want to talk about it.

CARPENTER
But you want to talk to him about it...

ERIN
My doctor.

CARPENTER
Yeah, your doctor. Why can't you talk to me? Shit, I am a soldier, you know. And you know, I thought we could talk about anything, you and me. I don't get it.

Erin stops and faces Carpenter.

ERIN
Look, I don't expect you to get it; wait, that didn't come out right. This is really hard, you know, and I just can't talk to you about it. It's nothing you've done, I just need to work this out myself, OK?

CARPENTER
Yeah, I guess, OK. Could we get together tonight? I'm off patrol for the night. Maybe we could get some time alone, you know?

ERIN
I don't know. Maybe. I'll let you know.

CARPENTER
Right. OK, I'll catch you later, then.

The couple arrives at a medical station: a tent with a large red cross painted on the roof and sides.

ERIN
This is me. I'll see you later.

CARPENTER
Yeah.

Erin gives him a weak smile and enters the tent. Carpenter lingers a moment then walks off.

CUT TO:

INT. MEDICAL TENT - DAY

Erin approaches a female Army MEDIC acting as the clinic's receptionist. The 19-year-old private first class looks up from the records she is sorting to greet Erin.

MEDIC
Hey, Sergeant Fuentes. Dr. Bennett is ready for you. Go on back.

Erin walks through a tent flap to meet the doctor.

THE ARMY PSYCHIATRIST

DR. MARTIN BENNETT, a lieutenant colonel wearing, like everyone else, a desert camouflage uniform, welcomes Erin to his tent-cum-office and motions her to his version of the analyst's couch: a beat-up olive-drab folding chair.

BENNETT
OK, Erin, it's been what, three days since we last spoke?

ERIN
Yes, sir.

BENNETT
How are you feeling? Any more nightmares?

ERIN

Yes, just about every night. I still can't focus very well. I keep thinking about the firefight.

BENNETT

And how is your squad member...

Bennett flips quickly through his notes.

BENNETT

...Ponce, right, and the men from the other platoon?

ERIN

Ponce's back in the States. If he doesn't lose his arm, he may be able to use it again some day. No thanks to me. Thomas, the guy with the glass fragments, he's blind. The other guy was just out of it. And you left off Rogers, the man I got killed.

BENNETT

You keep referring to your responsibility. Is that fair? Soldiers die in war.

ERIN

Yes, but I made mistakes. I didn't have them man the guns when we stopped; that's S.O.P. I let them down; I wasn't using my training.

BENNETT

Maybe so. But if it was standard operating procedure, then your soldiers should have done it without being told, right? Aren't they responsible?

ERIN

Are you sure you're an Army doctor? Yes, they are responsible, but I was in charge. It's my job to make sure the troops do their job. That's the way it is, that's what it means to be a sergeant.

BENNETT

OK, but isn't it also true that if you hadn't taken the quick action you did, you might well all be dead?

ERIN

Yes sir, I understand that. That's not all that bothers me, though. My nightmares aren't just about my troops.

BENNETT

What are they about? You've referred to the firefight but not much more.

ERIN

I killed 12 men. I wounded three more, and two of them had to have limbs amputated.

BENNETT

When I read your report, it said only 10 dead.

ERIN

The other two died later. I keep seeing them. It's horrible -- you don't ever want to see something like that, or hear or smell it. It's the worst thing in the world.

BENNETT

I know it's hard to talk about this, but try to tell me what you mean. What's the worst thing?

ERIN

It's really hard to explain -- have you ever been hunting, or seen an animal run over?

BENNETT

Yes, when I was a boy I did some hunting.

ERIN

I was with some boys once when I was a kid and they shot a rabbit with a rifle. It didn't die right away; it tried to run, then just sort of sat there stunned before it started twitching.

(MORE)

ERIN (cont'd)

When I got in that fight, I found out people do the same sort of thing. I hadn't seen dead or wounded people before. It's not like in the movies. It makes you sick and ashamed. You turn people into meat. I turned those guys into animals, and it was pitiful and disgusting.

BENNETT

We ask our soldiers to do a very hard thing, but you aren't wrong for having done it. Those men were trying to kill you, and you had a right to defend yourself and your soldiers.

ERIN

I know, but that doesn't make me feel better.

BENNETT

I understand. This can take some time. Do you have friends who have had similar experiences, or is there someone you really trust who you can share this with?

ERIN

I'm the only one in the unit who's been in combat so far -- other than Jenkins. But I'm his boss, I can't really talk like this with him.

BENNETT

You said you had a boyfriend, Mark, right? Is he someone who can help?

ERIN

I don't know. He tries, he really does, but he just doesn't understand. I think it's just beyond him. Besides, it's just not working out for us. He's into it more than I am, has been for a while. I was thinking about breaking up before this happened, but now I just don't know if I need the extra trouble of breaking up with him.

BENNETT

Well, it might be difficult, but in the end don't you think it's better to be honest with him?

ERIN

Yeah, I know. He's just very jealous, and I don't think he's going to take it very well.

BENNETT

Has he threatened or hurt you in some way?

ERIN

No, no, nothing like that -- I don't think he's that kind of guy.

BENNETT

Well, it's certainly your decision, but I'd like you to think about your relationship and whether waiting to end it -- if you no longer want to be with him -- is really the best way to go.

ERIN

OK, I know.

BENNETT

I also want you to stay on the medication I gave you, but I'd like you to try taking two of the pills each day instead of one, OK?

ERIN

Sure.

BENNETT

OK, let's see you on Friday at the same time.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT U.S. ARMY CAMP - DAY

Erin stands at attention in front of her assembled unit of about a hundred soldiers. She and her comrades, including Mark Carpenter and Specialist Jenkins, are in full battle dress with helmets.

THE COMMANDERS

A TWO-STAR GENERAL and TWO COLONELS march to Erin's front and come to a stop. They execute a right face to center themselves on the young sergeant. One of the colonels, now facing Erin, turns and calls to a SERGEANT at a podium.

COLONEL
Read the citation.

The sergeant at the podium reads from a prepared text into a microphone.

SERGEANT
Attention to orders: The Secretary of the Army has awarded the Silver Star to Sergeant Erin M. Fuentes for exceptional valor under fire. On 10 March, 2003, Sergeant Fuentes acted without regard for her own safety in defending her fire team against an enemy ambush.

Erin stands ramrod straight at attention, eyes dead ahead, as the sergeant continues.

SERGEANT
Fighting against vastly superior enemy numbers, Sergeant Fuentes flanked the enemy ambush and counterattacked, killing twelve enemy combatants, wounding three, and taking twenty more prisoner. Sergeant Fuentes' outstanding leadership, selflessness, and courage under fire reflect great honor upon her, the Army, and the United States of America. Given under my hand in the City of Washington, the Honorable Thomas E. White, Secretary of the Army.

The general takes the medal from a box held by one of the colonels. He reaches out to Erin's shirt pocket flap and pins the Silver Star's red, white, and blue ribbon to it.

GENERAL
You're a remarkable young woman, Sergeant. Your country is very proud of you and grateful for your bravery.

Erin salutes the general; he returns the salute.

ERIN
Thank you, sir.

The general shakes her hand, and the other senior officers follow suit. The three turn and march off, leaving Erin alone facing the assembly. The presiding colonel posts himself in front of the company.

COLONEL

At ease!

The soldiers relax from their rigid position at attention. In unison they spread their feet and clasp their hands behind them.

COLONEL

Join me in congratulating Sergeant Fuentes.

The colonel, the other officers, and the assembled troops give Erin a hearty round of applause. Once the applause dies down, the colonel dismisses the unit.

COLONEL

Battalion! Atten-tion!

The troops snap to attention.

COLONEL

Fall out!

Erin's comrades surround her to offer congratulations. The officers of her company get to her first, shaking her hand and praising her. Her platoon leader lingers, holding the handshake.

JAMES

You earned this. I know how hard it's been, but just know we're all very proud of you.

ERIN

Thank you, Sir. I'll be all right.

JAMES

OK. Just hang in there.

ERIN

OK.

Mark Carpenter tries to make his way through the crowd surrounding Erin, but others seem to keep cutting him off. Carpenter finally gets close enough to get Erin's attention; she waves at him through the crowd. He plunges forward but is pushed aside by a group of female soldiers. Erin tries to follow him with her eyes but is distracted by Specialist Jenkins, who gives her a hug.

JENKINS

I know I've said it before, but I owe you my life. So do the other guys. Thank you.

ERIN

We're a team; you don't owe...

JENKINS

Yes, but you did it -- you saved us. I owe you.

ERIN

(smiling)

OK, OK. Thanks. I'll see you later, OK?

JENKINS

All right.

Erin looks again for Carpenter, who has given up and is walking away from the crowd. He turns back one last time as another well-wisher pulls Erin away. She looks once more but her boyfriend is gone.

CUT TO:

EXT. U.S. ARMY CAMP - NIGHT

Erin walks in the rose twilight of a desert evening toward the tent Mark Carpenter shares with three other soldiers. "Sweet Child of Mine" by Guns 'n Roses plays on a boombox. Erin reaches the tent flap and calls to her boyfriend.

ERIN

Mark, you there?

CARPENTER

Yeah, just a minute.

Carpenter emerges from his tent.

ERIN

Want to go for a walk?

Carpenter lifts the flap on the tent.

CARPENTER

(to tentmates)

Hey, man, I'll be back in a bit.

Erin walks ahead a few steps, looking back to Carpenter as he catches up. They walk together into the dusk, alone in the desert beyond the tent city.

ERIN

I'm sorry about today. I just couldn't get away from everybody.

CARPENTER

Yeah, well...I just got tired of waiting. It wasn't that big a deal. Congratulations.

ERIN

Oh, yeah, thanks.

CARPENTER

So what did your shrink say?

ERIN

We just talked.

CARPENTER

What do you mean? You must be talking about something.

ERIN

You know, I've told you it's really hard for me to talk about this stuff.

CARPENTER

But you can talk to him about it.

ERIN

Yeah, because he's my doctor. I'm not trying to keep some big secret from you. I just can't even think of where to begin to talk about it with you. This really messed me up.

CARPENTER

Why don't you try harder...

ERIN

Because you wouldn't understand!

CARPENTER

Why? 'Cause I'm not a shrink?

ERIN

Because you don't get it...you know, you don't get me. You never have.

CARPENTER

What do you mean? We've been going out for months! This is pretty good...

ERIN

No, Mark, it's not. It hasn't been for a while. It was fun at first, but it's just not working, and I can't fake it.

CARPENTER

What do you mean, fake it?

ERIN

Not like that. Shit, this isn't about you!

CARPENTER

Hold on -- one day everything's fine, now you're telling me this is all a lie. What the fuck?

ERIN

You call this fine? I'm a mess from this, and anyway, we've been going in different directions for awhile...

CARPENTER

Bullshit. You've gone in a different direction, not me. I don't fucking believe this.

Carpenter begins walking in a circle, distraught and near tears.

ERIN

Look, calm down. We can still be friends...

Carpenter stops and faces Erin.

CARPENTER

I don't want to be friends. I love you. I know I hadn't said it, but I wanted to marry you.

ERIN

Oh, Mark. I'm really sorry. I had no idea. I don't know what...

CARPENTER

You don't know what to say? How about you love me too? How about I didn't waste all this fucking time?

ERIN

I'm sorry.

CARPENTER

I don't want you to be sorry; I want you to give me another chance! We can make it work. You never even gave me a chance to fix things.

ERIN

You can't fix it. It's me.

CARPENTER

That's not good enough. You owe me a chance.

ERIN

Mark, I'm sorry, but I can't make myself feel the way you want me to. But we can stay friends, OK? I do care about you.

Carpenter's anger boils over. He towers over Erin, tears in his eyes.

CARPENTER

That's bullshit! Don't you fucking say you care about me! You're just like all the other ones.

ERIN

Look, I said I'm sorry, and I want to be your friend. I'm going now; maybe we can talk more when you calm down.

Erin turns to walk back toward the tents. Carpenter tackles her at the waist, knocking her to the ground. He tries to get on top of her; she kicks her legs to backpedal away from him. Carpenter pins Erin's arms and kneels on her legs. Erin struggles to get away.

ERIN

What the fuck are you doing? I'm going to scream!

CARPENTER

We're going to do it one more time,
and then if you still want to, you
can go.

ERIN

No, Mark. It's over, OK? It's
over.

Carpenter ignores her, trying to unbuckle her belt while
keeping her pinned.

ERIN

Stop it! Mark! Stop!

Erin can't get free. She goes slack.

ERIN

Wait -- let me do it. Let's do
this right.

Carpenter relaxes his grip a little, waiting to see if Erin
means it. She pulls her hands in, unfastens her belt buckle,
and unbuttons the top button of her pants.

ERIN

Come on.

CARPENTER

Really?

Erin nods. Carpenter looks down to unbuckle his belt and
lower his pants. Erin reaches between his legs as if to
guide him to her but instead makes a fist and punches
Carpenter's testicles. Carpenter gasps for air and rolls
over in the dirt, pants halfway down his legs.

CARPENTER

(hoarse with pain)

You fucking cunt! I'll fucking
kill you!

Erin jumps up and runs back to the tents. Carpenter
struggles to get to his feet. He pulls his pants up and
staggers back toward camp.

CARPENTER

Come back here! Fucking bitch.
Cunt!

As Erin gains more distance from Carpenter, she slows a bit, alternating between jogging and walking toward the lights of the camp in the distance, wiping tears of rage and terror from her eyes so she can see where she's going.

FADE TO:

EXT. SMALL CALIFORNIA TOWN STREET - DAY

Flag-waving citizens line the short main street of Erin's hometown, a wide spot in a highway to somewhere more exciting. Erin rides down the street on the bonnet of a convertible in her dress uniform, waving to the small but welcoming crowd. Members of the V.F.W. and American Legion, old men in red and blue garrison caps, stand as straight as their bodies allow and salute as she passes. Erin reflexively returns the salute.

CUT TO:

EXT. ERIN'S FAMILY HOME - DAY

Erin, still in her dress uniform, leads a line of family and friends past a long buffet table in her grandparents' modest back yard. Little children play hide and seek among the assortment of irregularly-sized picnic benches, folding tables, and patio tables set up for the party. Yellow ribbons seem to cover the chain-link fence enclosing the yard.

Erin picks up her plate and drink and settles at a picnic table surrounded by well-wishers. Other guests come over during the meal to say hello. Between bites Erin finds herself answering the same questions over and over again.

ERIN

(to FEMALE GUEST #1)

Yes, it was very scary.

ERIN

(to MALE GUEST #1)

I just relied on my training. I didn't have time to think.

ERIN

(to MALE GUEST #2)

Uh-huh, I was scared.

ERIN

(to MALE GUEST #3)

I didn't really think. The training just kicked in.

ERIN
(to FEMALE GUEST #2)
It was scary. Really scary.

CUT TO:

EXT. ERIN'S FAMILY HOME - MOMENTS LATER

ERIN'S FATHER

ED FUENTES puts a bite of food in his mouth and catches a look from Erin in the middle of the gaggle of inquisitors. She needs help.

Ed puts his plate down, rises from his table, and walks over to Erin.

ED
Excuse me, honey. Can you come in the house for a minute?

ERIN
Oh, sure, Dad. Excuse me, everybody.

The guests go on talking among themselves as Erin and her dad head for the house.

CUT TO:

INT. ERIN'S FAMILY HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Erin exhales with relief once she enters the house.

ED
It looked like it was getting a little thick out there.

ERIN
Thanks, Dad. They mean well. It's just kind of a lot all at once, you know?

ED
There's no hurry, honey. We're all just super proud of you. You want to just cool out in here for awhile? I'll deal with the people.

Erin nods and gives him a quick hug and a kiss on the cheek.

Ed returns to the party, leaving Erin alone in the living room.

The wall facing her is filled with family pictures: a portrait of Erin's grandmother and grandfather at the top, then pictures of Erin's aunts and uncles, and finally a crowd of high school photos of Erin and her cousins at the bottom.

A number of the kids of Erin's generation, male and female, appear in military uniforms with American flags behind them. Only one of the older portraits includes a uniformed subject: the picture of Erin's uncle Marty, a smiling young Marine of 19. A black ribbon crosses the top left hand corner of the frame. At the bottom of the frame is a small metal plate engraved with the words, "Pfc. Martin L. Fuentes, 1947-1966"

ERIN'S GRANDMOTHER

MARIA FUENTES, a heavysset woman in her 70s, enters the living room from the kitchen carrying more food and finds her granddaughter staring at the photograph of her dead son. She pauses for a moment and almost turns back before deciding to engage Erin.

MARIA

How you doing, hon? You get enough to eat?

Erin, startled, turns away from the pictures to face her grandmother.

ERIN

Oh, yes, Grandma. Everything was great. Thanks so much for getting everybody together like this.

MARIA

It was nothing, honey; we're just so proud of you and happy to have you home.

ERIN

Thanks, Grandma.

Maria joins Erin in front of the picture wall.

ERIN

You sure have a lot of grandkids. It's been awhile since I saw all of them together.

MARIA

Yes I do. I've been very blessed with my kids and grandkids.

ERIN

Grandma, I was thinking, I hope all this doesn't bring back bad memories, you know, about Uncle Marty.

MARIA

Oh, sweetheart, I made my peace with it a long time ago, and I know your uncle is at peace, waiting for the rest of us.

ERIN

Thanks, Grandma. I was just a little worried.

MARIA

I know, baby, I know. You are a wonderful granddaughter, and I don't want you to worry. Now, I'm going to get this outside before people complain there's not enough food. You just relax.

Maria turns to leave.

ERIN

Grandma?

MARIA

Yeah, hon?

Flashback to Erin firing at the Iraqis, and the faces of the dead.

ERIN

Grandma, I did things...you know...what about their mothers?

Maria, thrown by Erin's willingness to dwell on the subject, wants to end this conversation.

MARIA

Father at mass told us that soldiers are not committing a sin when they take life in war. Don't you worry, now.

Maria hurries to the back yard, leaving Erin to ponder her uncle's photograph.

CUT TO:

EXT. ERIN'S FAMILY HOME - LATER

Erin returns to the party, looser, a beer in her hand.

THE WORLD WAR II VET

Erin's GREAT UNCLE IZZY sits apart from the crowd. Izzy is 80 but still a rock of a man, with bristle-cut white hair that contrasts with his dark brown skin. He finishes a can of beer, crushes it, then tosses the can into a waste basket before pulling another beer out of a cooler. He sits down on a bench, opens the new beer, and takes a swig. He fishes a cigarette out of the pack in his shirt pocket, lights it, and takes a drag.

Erin takes a drink of her beer and approaches the old man. As she gets closer, the tattoos on the man's bare forearms stand out more clearly. One arm displays a faded green tattoo of the US Marine Corps globe and anchor, while the other arm is inscribed with the word "GUADALCANAL."

Izzy takes no note of Erin's approach. He stares ahead, drinking his beer and smoking his cigarette.

ERIN

Uncle Izzy?

The man, apparently hard of hearing, does not react. Erin raises her voice.

ERIN

Uncle Izzy?

Izzy jerks a little in reaction to the sound of Erin's voice. He faces her.

IZZY

Huh? Who are you?

ERIN

I'm Erin, Ed's daughter. Hi, Uncle Izzy.

IZZY

You the one the party's for?

ERIN

Yes, sir.

IZZY

What did you do?

ERIN

Nothing. I'm just back from Iraq.

IZZY

That's good. What were you doing there? You a secretary or a nurse or something?

ERIN

No, sir, I was an M.P.

IZZY

I never liked M.P.s. Threw me in the brig for letting off steam.

ERIN

I'm sorry to hear that.

IZZY

Huh?

ERIN

I said I'm sorry to hear that.

IZZY

It was a long time ago. Smoke?

ERIN

Oh, no thanks.

Izzy takes another drag on his cigarette, burning it down to the filter. He stubs it out, finishes his beer, and crushes the can. He's loaded. He grabs another beer, cracks it open, and lights another cigarette.

ERIN

Good talking to you, Uncle Izzy.

Izzy sits on the bench and goes back to staring ahead at nothing, drinking and smoking. Erin walks away but doesn't rejoin the crowd.

CUT TO:

EXT. A PARKING LOT FACING MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Erin, in jeans and a polo shirt following the party, sits on the tailgate of a pickup truck with a group of six cousins and/or high school friends sharing a 12-pack of beer. Everyone except Erin is clearly part of a couple; two of the women are pregnant.

The women chat about their children or their pregnancies; the men bitch about their bosses. Erin feigns interest, but she's bored. She's the only one who's been anywhere, except for those who are still away in the war.

One of the men hands her a beer. Erin smiles and takes it.

ERIN

Thanks.

Erin opens the can as her uncle Izzy staggers down Main Street. He reaches a building bordering the parking lot where Erin and company are sitting. He places a forearm on the wall of the building, and with his free hand opens his fly and urinates on the wall.

Some of the girls giggle; Erin turns to the guy who handed her the beer.

ERIN

Help him out, OK?

The man jumps out of the truck bed and ambles over to Izzy. Izzy finishes, however, and zips up and moves on before Erin's friend can reach him. The man turns around to face the group, shrugs, and returns to the truck.

Erin puts her beer down and hops off the tailgate.

ERIN

Hey guys, I'm really tired. I'm going to head home. I'll see you later.

The young people say good night to Erin and go back to their partying. Erin walks off toward her home.

CUT TO:

INT. ERIN'S FAMILY HOME - LATER

Erin, buzzed, fumbles with the front door to the house. Her father is passed out on the couch, a beer can lying on its side in front of him. Erin quietly walks past him toward her room. Erin lies down in her old bedroom full of girlish things: stuffed animals, posters of teen heart throbs. She can't stay here anymore.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ARIZONA DESERT - DAY

SUBTITLE: TUCSON, ARIZONA - ONE YEAR LATER

Erin's hand finds an outcropping of rock. She pulls herself up and takes a seat near the summit of a mountain overlooking the Tucson valley.

Erin's hair is longer, and the trim, athletic young woman's shorts and tank top are a striking departure from her austere uniforms. Her skin has browned after many climbs like this one.

Erin looks out over the bright, blinding desert afternoon, has a drink of water, and begins what will be a long descent to the valley floor.

CUT TO:

INT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS HALLWAY - DAY

Now a student at the University of Arizona, Erin emerges from a classroom as a lecture ends. She stops to look at an internship notice posted among similar announcements on a bulletin board outside the law department office. The notice reads, in part,

"Courtroom internship at Pima County Court. Unpaid, but internship valued at 3 pre-law elective credits. Contact office of Judge Lydia Martinez."

Erin pulls out a notebook from her backpack and jots the information down.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Erin walks into the county courthouse in a crisp business suit and works her way to an office reception area. She approaches the RECEPTIONIST, a friendly woman about Erin's age.

RECEPTIONIST

Erin Fuentes? Great. I'll tell Judge Martinez you're here.

ERIN

Thanks.

RECEPTIONIST

(Into telephone)

Judge? Your ten o'clock is here.
OK.

THE JUDGE

JUDGE LYDIA MARTINEZ emerges confidently from her office, smiling and hand outstretched.

MARTINEZ

Please come in, Ms. Fuentes. Have a seat.

CUT TO:

INT. JUDGE MARTINEZ' CHAMBERS - DAY

The two women sit on opposite sides of Martinez' desk in the judge's modest office. Erin glances at the diplomas on the wall and the judge's robe on a coat rack as she prepares herself mentally for her job interview.

MARTINEZ

So tell me, Erin, why do you want this internship?

ERIN

Well, your honor, as you know I'm in the pre-law program at the university and I thought this would be a great opportunity for me to learn about trial law while I work on my degree.

MARTINEZ

You don't have to call me "your honor" in here. OK, is that the kind of law you want to practice, criminal law?

ERIN

Yes, ma'am, I do.

MARTINEZ

You want to be a prosecutor or a defense attorney?

ERIN

A prosecutor, ma'am.

MARTINEZ

Why is that?

ERIN

I want to help put away criminals, ma'am. I was an M.P. in the Army, so I guess that put me on the prosecution side for good.

MARTINEZ

Yes, I see you had a very impressive Army career. We looked up your military record;
(MORE)

MARTINEZ (cont'd)
it says here you won the Silver
Star in Iraq. That's for courage
in combat, isn't it?

ERIN
Yes, ma'am.

MARTINEZ
You want to tell me about it?

ERIN
Well, I don't like to talk about it
much. I was in a firefight with
some Iraqis who were supposed to be
surrendering.

MARTINEZ
You should be proud of yourself.
Not everyone could do that.

ERIN
Yes, ma'am, I understand. Like I
said, I just prefer not to talk
about it too much.

MARTINEZ
Fair enough. Tell me this, though.
Why did you leave the military?
You got this medal, you were a
sergeant, then a little more than a
year later you're here in my office
applying for an internship.

ERIN
Right, well, I'd always planned to
go to school after my enlistment
ended, and my time just came up.
I'd had enough, you know?

MARTINEZ
Of course, of course. And if you
don't mind my asking, why did you
move to Arizona? I understand
you're from California.

ERIN
Well, I'm from a little town, and
the nearest school just wasn't that
good. I heard the program here is
really strong, and Tucson's great
for mountain biking and climbing,
which I love.

Martinez leafs through Erin's application file.

MARTINEZ

Those sound like good reasons. I came from a small town myself, and I know it's hard to go back, especially since you've been on the other side of the world. All right, let me see, it looks like you've done very well in your classes so far.

ERIN

Yes, ma'am, best in my class.

MARTINEZ

OK! Let me explain to you how I work in my court. I expect you to behave with utmost dignity and professionalism in there. You keep quiet unless I call on you. You dress appropriately, like you are now, or at least no jeans or shorts. Be on time. If you have a school commitment that will make you late, call in so we can cover for you. Don't make me wait -- ever. Can you do that?

ERIN

Yes, I can, ma'am. You have my word.

MARTINEZ

Good. When can you start?

CUT TO:

INT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

As Erin leaves the office, elated, the receptionist calls to her,

RECEPTIONIST

Congratulations!

ERIN

Thanks!

RECEPTIONIST

See you Monday!

ERIN

OK, thanks again; bye!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Erin at work: she takes notes on a laptop computer, reviews text, watches Martinez and lawyers at work.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - EVENING

Erin takes notes in a college pre-law class. A PROFESSOR drones on about constitutional law to the students peppered in small clusters throughout the lecture hall. Three SOPHOMORE BOYS in T-shirts adorned with the Greek letters of their fraternity try to catch Erin's attention with sidelong looks and clearing throats.

Erin hears the noise, looks up briefly, and ignores the boys.

One particularly OBNOXIOUS FRAT BOY tosses a wad of paper onto Erin's desk. When Erin looks up he mimics fellatio, opening and closing his mouth.

Erin straightens in her chair and looks toward the frat boy with a withering gaze that says, "Don't fuck with me." The boys back down with a sense that Erin is a lot older than she seemed at first.

A CLASSMATE

LAURA CARLSON, like Erin a bit older than her fellow students, has trouble repressing a grin as she meets Erin's eyes across the classroom.

THE TEACHING ASSISTANT

JOE JAMESON, a handsome graduate student sitting near the professor's podium, looks up from his text in time to catch Erin's exchange with the Greeks. He too smiles, impressed with the surprisingly tough student.

Suddenly embarrassed at drawing so much attention, Erin looks briefly from Laura to Joe and sticks her nose back in her book, scribbling notes.

Joe, still smiling, returns to his own notes.

Erin lifts her eyes up cautiously at Joe, allows herself a guilty smile, and starts writing again.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMPUS BUILDING - NIGHT

Erin leaves class among a group of other students. She unlocks her bicycle from a bike rack and slings her backpack over her shoulder. Laura Carlson walks through the group to face Erin just before she rides off. Up close, Laura appears older than her 25 years, in part because of the deep dark circles under her eyes and hair pulled back in a hurry to get out of the house in time for class.

LAURA

Hi.

ERIN

Hey -- how ya doin'?

LAURA

OK. My name's Laura. We're in class together.

Erin offers Laura her hand. Laura shakes it.

ERIN

Erin. What do you think of the class so far?

LAURA

It's pretty good. It's hard keeping up with the readings, though, especially when you have kids at home fighting for your attention. I end up having to give up sleep to study.

ERIN

How many kids you have?

LAURA

Two -- a boy and a girl. You have any kids?

ERIN

Me? No -- I'm not even married. Not quite ready for that yet.

Laura distractedly fondles her bare left ring finger.

LAURA

Yeah. I know what you mean. Well, I don't mean to hold you up, and I've got a babysitter waiting. I just wanted to tell you I thought it was cool how you got those assholes to back off.

ERIN
They really are jerks.

LAURA
Maybe we can study together
sometime?

ERIN
Sure. That would be great.

Joe walks out of the building and passes the two women on the sidewalk.

JOE
Have a good evening.

ERIN
You too.

LAURA
Good night.

Joe walks on out of earshot.

LAURA
He's cute.

ERIN
Yes, he is.

The two smile sheepishly.

LAURA
OK, I guess I'll see you later
then.

ERIN
Yeah. Good talking to you -- bye.

Erin rides off with a flattered smile as Laura walks to her car.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ERIN'S DREAM - NIGHT

Erin relives the Iraq firefight: The RPG explodes, Ponce is hit, she runs for cover, fires the grenade at the Iraqis. Iraqis fall as Erin lines them up in her sights.

Dead and wounded Iraqis sprawl before Erin; some groan or writhe in pain, while others twitch as they sputter blood with their last breaths.

CUT TO:

INT. ERIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Erin wakes up with a start before realizing where she is. She exhales and looks at the clock: 4:40 a.m. She runs a hand through her hair, swings her feet out of bed, and walks to the bathroom with a sigh.

CUT TO:

EXT. ARIZONA DESERT - DAWN

Erin pedals fast and hard on her mountain bike through scrub brush. She rides up a hill and pauses at last at a clearing overlooking the fading lights of the waking city. The workout has calmed her and chased away the horrible visions of her nightmare.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LIBRARY - DAY

Erin stands outside the university library, waiting for her study date with Laura. She walks inside the library, worried that perhaps she misunderstood where they were to meet.

Erin returns outside, walking around to another entrance. Still no Laura.

Erin looks at her watch and decides to call Laura. Erin enters the number on her cell phone and waits; Laura's answering machine comes on:

LAURA
(O.C. answering machine
recording)
Hi, this is Laura. I can't come to
the phone right now. Leave a
message and I'll call you back.

The machine beeps.

ERIN
Laura, hey, this is Erin. It's
6:15 and I can't find you. I'm
going to go in and study. Give me
a call on my cell if you still want
to get together. OK, bye.

Erin takes one last look around and walks into the library.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Erin takes her seat in Joe's classroom. She unpacks her bag, glancing over to notice Laura's empty desk.

Erin fishes for a pencil in her backpack and spots Laura entering the classroom. Laura averts her gaze and quickly takes her seat.

JOE

OK, let's get started. I want to pick up where we left off last week, when we were talking about Franklin's article...

Erin looks away, irritated that Laura won't make eye contact, and focuses on Joe's lecture.

EXT. CAMPUS BUILDING - EVENING

After class, Erin unlocks her bicycle and watches for Laura to exit the building. Students trickle out, and finally Laura comes through the door.

Erin cycles over to intercept Laura as she makes her way to a parking lot nearby.

ERIN

Hey, Laura --

Laura walks on, acknowledging Erin with a quick glance but still not making eye contact.

LAURA

Hi, Erin.

ERIN

I missed you the other night; I left a message for you but you never called me back.

LAURA

Yeah, I'm sorry; I forgot and got caught up with my kids. I meant to call.

Laura keeps moving, keeping her face in shadow.

ERIN

Laura, are you OK?

LAURA

Yeah, I'm fine; I just spaced out the other night, and I gotta get back to send the babysitter home. I'm sorry.

Erin draws closer, dismounts her bicycle, and walks alongside Laura to try to get a better look at her.

ERIN

Laura, listen, can I talk to you a second?

LAURA

I'm really in a hurry; maybe later, OK?

Erin steps in front of Laura, blocking the woman's path.

ERIN

What's wrong?

Laura looks up at Erin, revealing a bruised face under heavy makeup. Laura has a healing cut on her lower lip.

ERIN

Oh, Laura, what happened?

LAURA

Nothing; I'm fine, OK? I need to get home.

ERIN

Look, I'm not trying to be rude, but you don't look fine. I'm worried about you.

LAURA

You know, this really doesn't concern you, OK? I'll be all right.

ERIN

I can help; we can talk. I know you have to get back to the babysitter. How about I meet you at your place? I'll bring some frozen yogurt, or coffee.

Laura looks up, giving in a bit. She digs a scrap of paper out of her book bag and writes her address on it.

LAURA
OK, maybe that would be good.
Here's my address; it's not far
from here, up Euclid --

Erin takes the paper, examines it, and puts it in her pocket.
Laura reaches again into her bag, fishing for cash. She
produces some dollar bills and offers them to Erin.

ERIN
No, I've got it. So coffee, or
yogurt?

Laura puts her money away with some embarrassment. She
musters a smile for Erin.

LAURA
Some yogurt would be great -- oh,
but then the kids will be jealous.
Coffee.

ERIN
What do the kids like?

Laura smiles again, touched.

LAURA
Vanilla's great for all of us,
thanks.

ERIN
I'll see you there in about 15
minutes, then, OK?

LAURA
Yeah. Thanks.

ERIN
OK.

Laura walks to her car as Erin pedals away.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAURA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Erin rides up to Laura's house, two bags of frozen desserts
in her hand. She dismounts and approaches a small cottage.
She knocks on the door, and Laura answers it.

LAURA
Hi. Come on in.

ERIN

Thanks.

CUT TO:

INT. LAURA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Erin enters a living room littered with children's toys.

LAURA'S SON AND DAUGHTER sit watching a cartoon in their pajamas. Laura tries with some difficulty to shift their attention to their guest.

LAURA

Katy, Jake, hey, I want you to meet somebody.

Laura turns off the television. Katy, at seven the oldest, walks over ahead of her three-year-old brother Jake.

LAURA

Erin, this is Katy and Jake. You guys, Miss Erin brought us some dessert. Can you go eat it in the kitchen?

KATY

What is it?

ERIN

Some frozen yogurt.

JAKE

What flavor?

ERIN

Vanilla -- I hope that's OK.

Erin hands over one of the bags. Jake takes it from her.

JAKE

All right! Frozen yogurt!

LAURA

What do you guys say?

KATY

Thank you!

JAKE

Thank you!

ERIN

You're welcome.

LAURA
OK, go on in the kitchen.

The kids happily rush off to eat their dessert. Laura clears some toys off a chair for Erin to sit on and sits on a couch. Erin produces two cups of yogurt and hands one to Laura. She also passes Laura a plastic spoon.

LAURA
Thanks. This was really nice of you.

ERIN
Sure. You can get the next one.

The two sit silently eating their yogurt as the cartoon on the TV plays on.

ERIN
So, I don't mean to stick my nose in your business, but I'm worried about what happened.

Laura continues to eat quietly, looking down at her yogurt. The two sit for a moment in awkward silence.

LAURA
You know, I'm really touched that you care. I just don't want to bring you into this.

ERIN
You don't have to be alone.

LAURA
Yeah.

Laura lingers over her yogurt for a moment, then begins to weep quietly. Erin puts her yogurt down and joins Laura on the couch.

ERIN
Hey --

LAURA
I don't want the kids to see me; let's go on the porch.

The two walk toward the door. Laura gives a look back at her kids in the kitchen engrossed in their yogurt.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAURA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Laura leaves the front door cracked as the two women take a seat on patio chairs on the porch. Laura wipes away her tears.

LAURA

My husband did this to me. He's really mad because I decided I wanted a divorce. We've been separated for a few months and I've just had enough of his crap, but he says I don't have a right to break up the family.

ERIN

You don't have to take this. Did you call the police?

LAURA

No, I'm OK, I didn't want to bring the police into this. I don't want my kids to have to see their daddy in jail.

ERIN

But they shouldn't have to see their mommy hurt, either.

LAURA

It's not that simple. You just don't know.

ERIN

I'm sorry. I just want to help.

LAURA

I know. You are helping, really.

ERIN

Let me try again -- have you thought about getting a restraining order? He wouldn't go to jail, but he would have to stay away. You'd be safer that way.

LAURA

No, I haven't thought about that. You know, I just want to work this out myself. It would be nice if I could talk to you, though. I've really felt lonely with this. I'm afraid to talk to my parents about it.

ERIN
You can call me anytime, seriously,
anytime at all. You won't be
bothering me. I'd be hurt if you
didn't call me, OK?

LAURA
Yeah. Thanks so much. That means
a lot to me.

ERIN
Really, anytime.

Jake appears at the door

JAKE
Mama, what are you doing?

LAURA
Miss Erin and I are just talking,
sweetie. You ready to brush your
teeth and get into bed?

JAKE
No...

LAURA
Yeah, well, it's time.

JAKE
Aww!

LAURA
It's late, and you have school
tomorrow.

ERIN
Yeah, I should be going too.

LAURA
You don't have to go.

ERIN
No, it's OK. I have a lot of
studying to do.

LAURA
OK. Thanks.

ERIN
You call me, OK? Anytime.

LAURA
I will.

Laura gives Erin a hug, then lets her go.

ERIN

Good night. Nice to meet you,
Jake.

LAURA

Good night. Can you say good
night, Jakey?

JAKE

Good night!

Laura takes a last look at Erin as she pedals away. She picks up her little boy and carries him inside, closing the door behind her.

Down the street, a man has been watching the home from a parked car. The man starts the car and drives toward the house.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Erin prepares her laptop to take notes. Judge Martinez enters the room and walks to her seat as the BAILIFF calls court to order. The defendant, JACOB CARLSON, his ATTORNEY, and the PROSECUTOR stand.

BAILIFF

All rise! The Honorable Judge Lydia
Martinez presiding.

MARTINEZ

Be seated. All right, what do we
have next?

BAILIFF

Pima County vs. Jacob Carlson, your
honor.

MARTINEZ

County attorney present? Very
well, proceed.

PROSECUTOR

Your honor, Mr. Carlson is charged
with aggravated battery against his
wife, Laura Carlson.

Erin lifts her head from her notes as she recognizes Laura's name. She stands and looks hard at the defendant.

Martinez shoots Erin a look, and Erin remembers her place. She retakes her seat, agitated.

PROSECUTOR

Mr. Carlson and Ms. Carlson are legally separated pending resolution of Ms. Carlson's petition for divorce. On the night of the 19th, your honor, county sheriff's deputies arrested Mr. Carlson after they received a 911 call from Ms. Carlson's home. When deputies arrived at the home, they found Ms. Carlson bleeding from a blow to the nose and suffering from a number of bruises on her face as shown in these police photos, if I may approach.

MARTINEZ

Go ahead, and let's log them in.

Martinez looks through a stack of photographs of a beaten Laura. The pictures show caked blood around Laura's nostrils added to the bruises her husband gave her earlier.

Erin can barely contain her anger at the monster in front of her.

PROSECUTOR

Your honor, the county requests denial of bail due to the severity of the attack and the continuing danger to the victim.

ATTORNEY

Your honor, my client has no previous record of arrest --

ERIN

But he --

Martinez raps her gavel at Erin's outburst.

MARTINEZ

Order!

Embarrassed and angry, Erin regains her bearing.

ATTORNEY

Judge, may I proceed?

MARTINEZ

Yes.

ATTORNEY

As I was saying, Mr. Carlson has no previous arrests and he has no interest in going near his estranged wife. Moreover, the bruises on Mrs. Carlson's face are not fresh and did not result from the disturbance that led to Mr. Carlson's arrest. Since Mrs. Carlson did not report her previous injuries to the police --

MARTINEZ

I understand; cut to the chase.

ATTORNEY

Mr. Carlson does need to keep providing for his two children, your honor, and keeping him in jail and out of work would make his children suffer needlessly.

MARTINEZ

Has Mr. Carlson enrolled in counseling?

ATTORNEY

Yes he has, your honor. This morning.

MARTINEZ

I'll grant bail of one hundred thousand dollars and hereby issue a restraining order against Mr. Carlson. Sir, you are to remain more than 250 yards away from Laura Carlson, her residence, and your children until the end of your trial. Do you understand the order I've given you, Mr. Carlson?

Carlson shows all the understanding of a child being disciplined; he grants the judge the minimum compliance required to get out of this uncomfortable setting.

CARLSON

Yes. But I want to see my kids.

MARTINEZ

Don't push it, Mr. Carlson. Next case.

Martinez brings the case to a close with a rap of her gavel. Erin watches Carlson shuffle out in shackles and shuts her computer. She gathers her things and quietly rushes out of the courtroom. Martinez watches her, annoyed.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Erin pulls out her cell phone as soon as she clears the courtroom doors and dials Laura's number. She sets her bag down. The phone rings, and Laura picks up.

LAURA

(O.C.)

Hello?

ERIN

Laura! It's Erin. I just heard what happened. Are you OK?

LAURA

(O.C.)

Yeah, I'm OK. Shook up more than anything, really.

ERIN

I feel awful. Why didn't you call me?

LAURA

(O.C.)

I would have, but I just didn't have time. He came right after you left -- he was probably watching us. Then the paramedics were looking at me, and I had to deal with the kids.

ERIN

I'm sorry. This isn't about me. I just wish I could have been there to help.

LAURA

I'm OK. I think it'll be OK now. How did you hear?

ERIN

I'm in court. I just saw them issue that bastard a restraining order.

LAURA

They didn't keep him in jail?

ERIN

No, they let him out on bail. He said he needed to work. But they issued him a restraining order so he has to stay away from you or he loses his bail and has to go to jail. You should hear from the court pretty soon.

LAURA

(O.C.)

OK, I'll be waiting for the call.

ERIN

Are you all right there? Do you want me to watch your kids or something?

LAURA

(O.C.)

No, my mom has them. I'm just going to clean up and pack some things for myself and go over there in a little bit.

ERIN

I'd like to come see you if that's OK.

LAURA

(O.C.)

Yeah, maybe later once I'm done here. I just want to get out of here and then maybe we can get together at my mom's place.

ERIN

OK. You sure you're all right?

LAURA

(O.C.)

Yeah, I'm fine. Thanks for everything, Erin. You've been great.

ERIN

OK. Call me. Bye.

Erin hangs up, picks up her things, and walks out of the courthouse.

CUT TO:

INT. ERIN'S HOME - EVENING

Erin walks in, arms filled with bags of groceries. She sets the plastic bags down on the floor and begins to empty them. Erin flips on the radio as she puts the groceries into her refrigerator. The music ends on the radio as the hourly newscast comes on. Erin pulls her keys from the deadlock on her door, shuts the door, and returns to unpacking the groceries.

ANNOUNCER

A Tucson woman was shot to death today, just hours after her estranged husband was issued a restraining order in county court.

Erin stops cold, turns away from the open refrigerator, and reaches to turn up the volume on the radio.

ANNOUNCER

Laura Carlson, 25, was pronounced dead on arrival at Tucson Medical Center. Police have arrested her husband, Jacob Carlson, who was issued a restraining order prohibiting him from going near her just this morning.

As the radio announcer continues, Erin rushes to her living room, flicks the TV on with her remote, and switches to the local news. On the screen is the face of the man in court earlier that day, frozen in his mug shot. That image is followed by the Exhibit picture Martinez saw of Laura Carlson's traumatized face.

Erin forgets to shut the refrigerator as she grabs her keys and rushes out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTHOUSE, JUDGE'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT

Erin walks through the judge's darkened reception area and knocks on Martinez' office door. Martinez answers without looking up from the backlog of court papers on her desk; much of her afternoon was consumed fielding phone calls from reporters seeking comment on the Carlson killing.

MARTINEZ

Come in.

ERIN

Excuse me, ma'am, could I talk to you for a minute?

MARTINEZ

It's been a pretty long day, but all right, have a seat. What do you want to talk about?

ERIN

It's the Carlson case, ma'am.

MARTINEZ

You're not a reporter, are you?

Martinez looks up and sees Erin has been crying, her eyes puffy and red. Erin looks younger than the professional former soldier Martinez had dealt with before.

MARTINEZ

I'm sorry, that didn't come out right. I've just talked to a lot of reporters today and you caught me off guard. OK, I'm listening.

ERIN

I'm not sure how to put this; how does, why...

MARTINEZ

Erin, as you can see, I'm very busy. You came all the way down here, what is it?

ERIN

I knew her -- Laura Carlson. I didn't think he could do it...

MARTINEZ

That explains your behavior in court?

ERIN

Yes, I'm sorry about that, ma'am. But I just don't understand how that man was in your courtroom, and he walked out of there and killed his wife. How could that happen?

MARTINEZ

How could I let it happen, you mean? First, I'm sorry your friend was killed.

ERIN

Actually, we had just met, but I think we would have been really good friends. She was very sweet, and she had two little kids...

MARTINEZ

Again, I'm terribly sorry. That said, you need to understand some things about the profession you've chosen. Look, we're all grown-ups here, right? We enforce the law, and the law says this guy didn't have enough of a track record to lock him up. That doesn't mean we put a gun in his hand. He did. And now he'll never see the street again. You need to get used to this. We work within the law; we're not in the business of fixing problems or getting inside people's heads. Do you understand?

ERIN

Yes, ma'am.

MARTINEZ

I know what I say sounds cold, I know. But the simple fact is that I am here to deter crime when possible, punish the guilty within the law when deterrence fails. If you want to be a prosecutor, you will have to understand that. Good prosecutors do, and get convictions within that context. Anything else?

ERIN

No, ma'am. Thanks for your time, I appreciate it.

MARTINEZ

All right. Sorry again; I feel for Ms. Carlson and her kids. Good night, Erin.

Martinez returns to her papers, making it clear the meeting is over. Erin rises and makes her way to the office door.

ERIN
Good night, Your Honor.

MARTINEZ
Erin?

ERIN
Yes?

MARTINEZ
I appreciate your coming to talk to me about these things. You're here to learn. Just make sure it doesn't show up in the courtroom again. Clear?

ERIN
Yes, ma'am. Good night.

MARTINEZ
Good night.

Erin walks out of the office and into the night, leaving Martinez to deal with yet another phone call. Martinez lets it ring.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

THE FUNERAL PARTY

On an already blazing hot, blinding bright Tucson morning, Erin approaches a small burial ceremony and stops in the relatively cool shade of a tree close enough to hear the proceedings but not to disturb the grieving family assembled under a tent graveside.

She watches LAURA CARLSON'S MOTHER sob in LAURA'S FATHER's arms as A MINISTER attempts to soothe the devastated family with talk of the peace Laura now enjoys.

LITTLE CHILDREN -- Laura's nephews and nieces -- play quietly in the grass with crayons and coloring books while THEIR PARENTS sit huddled close with hunched shoulders and bowed heads.

Laura's two children, in contrast, sit facing their mother's flower-covered casket on funeral home folding chairs, their feet not reaching the ground, expressionless. Surrounded by loving relatives, they are nonetheless totally alone.

A STRANGER

A moving figure catches Erin's eye. Like her, a slight, GRAY HAIRED MAN watches the funeral from a respectful distance. The man has a long, rectangular white cardboard box in his arms. The man realizes he has been noticed, turns, and walks off to another part of the cemetery. Erin suddenly feels self-conscious, takes a last look at the burial, and walks away.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Erin sits in a corner with a notepad to watch the judge deal with a domestic abuse case.

A PROSECUTOR and a YOUNG WOMAN

NICK JOHNSON argues with Judge Martinez on behalf of his client, SARAH COCHRAN, who sits next to him in front of the judge's desk. Cochran fidgets nervously in her seat and stares blankly ahead. She has deep, dark circles under her eyes, a woman haunted by fear of letting her guard down.

JOHNSON

Judge, Ms. Cochran fears for her life. She broke off a relationship with Mark Harper some two months ago, and since that time Mr. Harper has made over seventy harassing phone calls to Ms. Cochran.

MARTINEZ

How are these calls harassing? Ms. Cochran, why do you fear for your life? Has Mr. Harper said he'd hurt you?

COCHRAN

Not in so many words, but he just won't stop calling me and telling me he can't let me go. I really feel he's stalking me.

JOHNSON

Judge, Harper has behaved this way before. I have affidavits from two of his previous girlfriends describing phone calls, showing up at their places of work, at their homes. He fits the pattern.

MARTINEZ

But no violence.

JOHNSON

One of the ex-girlfriends says he hit her and threatened to kill her...

MARTINEZ

Did she call the police?

JOHNSON

No, your honor, she did not. But that allegation, combined with the corroboration of Ms. Cochran's complaints, merits a restraining order on nuisance grounds, at least.

MARTINEZ

I agree. I'll grant the restraining order requiring Harper to remain at least 250 yards away from Ms. Cochran and to cease calling her. Thank you.

JOHNSON

Thank you, Judge.

COCHRAN

(through tears)

Thank you so much; this has been so hard on me, you just can't imagine.

MARTINEZ

You take care, Ms. Cochran.

All but Martinez file out of the Judge's chambers, Erin last. As she leaves the room, a man approaches her in the courthouse hallway.

THE REPORTER

RICK HARVEY, a small, gray-haired man in his early 60s wearing a rumpled tan corduroy jacket and plaid shirt, moves quietly but deliberately to catch up to Erin. As she's about to duck into an office, he says quietly,

HARVEY

It won't do any good, you know.

Caught off guard, Erin turns on her heels and nearly drops her notepad.

ERIN

Can I help you?

HARVEY
It won't do any good. The
restraining order. It never does.

ERIN
I'm sorry, sir, I don't know you
and I don't know what you're
talking about. You'll have to
excuse

Harvey extends his hand, and Erin juggles her notepad and pen
to shake it.

HARVEY
My name is Rick Harvey.

ERIN
From the newspaper?

HARVEY
Yes, that's right. Glad to meet
you.

ERIN
I'm sorry, Mr. Harvey, but I don't
have any comment on court matters.
You should know that.

HARVEY
I'm not interested in talking to
you for a story. I think my
comment about the restraining order
made that clear.

ERIN
Mr. Harvey...

HARVEY
Rick.

ERIN
Mr. Harvey, I'm not following you
and I'm very busy. I only have a
half hour to eat and get caught up
on my work. Excuse me...

HARVEY
We saw each other at the funeral
for Laura Carlson.

ERIN
That was you?

HARVEY

Right. I'm not trying to get a comment out of you, but I do want to talk to you. I know you're busy right now. Meet me 7:30 tonight at the Bob's Big Boy on East Broadway. OK?

ERIN

I don't know, I don't think so.

HARVEY

I'll see you there. The restraining orders, remember. Later.

Harvey turns and walks away; Erin watches him leave, then enters her office.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Harvey nurses a cup of coffee in a booth in the largely empty Bob's. Erin comes in, sees Harvey, and walks toward the booth. Harvey smiles and stands to greet her. He waves a waitress over to the table. Harvey and Erin sit down.

HARVEY

Thanks for coming. I knew you would. Have you eaten? You want something?

ERIN

I already ate, thanks. I'll just have a cup of coffee.

HARVEY

(to arriving waitress)
Another cup of coffee here, please.

HARVEY

Listen, thanks for coming. I picked this place because I knew we wouldn't see anybody from the courthouse. Lawyers and judges don't generally hang out at the Big Boy.

ERIN

Neither do I, really, and I've got midterms coming so I don't have a lot of time. So why do you want to talk to me?

HARVEY

Because I think you're a good person and you're dealing with some things I've experienced first hand. I figured that from seeing you at the funeral. I lost my daughter seven years ago. A man she was living with murdered her.

ERIN

I'm very sorry to hear that.

HARVEY

My daughter had a restraining order against this man, just like Laura Carlson, but that didn't stop him. You see, if you're a man who's already threatened a woman or beaten her, you're probably not going to be deterred by a court document.

ERIN

I'm so sorry.

HARVEY

It's OK; I've made my peace with it, for the most part. I visit my Annie every week -- that's why I was carrying a box of flowers, they were for her.

ERIN

If you don't mind my asking, what happened to the man?

HARVEY

To the murderer? He spent three years in jail and is out now. I don't know what's become of him.

ERIN

How could he get out so quickly?

HARVEY

You'd be surprised how many killers get out of jail after just a little time. Very few get life, especially when you're talking about a so-called crime of passion. This guy never killed anyone before, he was young, came from a good family, he was white, etcetera, etcetera. Didn't make Annie any less dead.

(MORE)

HARVEY (cont'd)

Now he's free to ruin some other girl's life.

ERIN

And you don't know where he is now?

HARVEY

No. He left town years ago. I followed him for a while, but I stopped. I had to let it go or it would have eaten me up.

ERIN

Mr. Harvey...

HARVEY

Rick.

ERIN

Rick, I'm really sorry about your daughter. Very sorry. But I'm not sure why you wanted to tell me about this. I wish there were something I could do, but I don't think you're even looking for me to do anything.

HARVEY

After I saw you at the funeral I asked around and heard you were studying to become a prosecutor. That made me think of you as a friend. You're on the right side, and I wish you well. I just hope working in the courthouse won't disillusion you. We need good people who are willing to put up with the drudgery and disappointment of trial work to put killers away. If you do your job, these scumbags won't be able to walk out of jail three years after taking the life of a precious girl.

ERIN

But what I keep thinking about is how Laura Carlson tried to protect herself from her husband and he killed her anyway. The funny thing is, we were taking a law course together. She wanted to be a paralegal. And what did the law do for her?

(MORE)

ERIN (cont'd)

What good are prosecutors if we can't protect people who ask for help? You said it yourself, restraining orders don't do any good.

HARVEY

No, they don't. But that leaves out half the problem, which is that women keep going back to these killers. Annie gave the murderer the benefit of the doubt over and over again, trying to make her so-called relationship work. She wasn't crazy, she just couldn't see how far down in the hole she was, and then it was too late. Anyway, that's the law, and you can't do much about that. But what you can do is truly punish criminals. I don't know about deterrence, but I'll settle for real punishment. I want killers to live a long time knowing they'll never be free. So stick with it, and don't forget about Laura Carlson, or about Annie Harvey. OK?

ERIN

I won't. I promise.

HARVEY

Thanks. Sorry I dragged you out here. You finish your coffee; I'll take care of the check on my way out. See you in court.

ERIN

Thanks.

Erin sits alone, sips her coffee, and lingers over Harvey's words.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COURTHOUSE FILE ROOM - NIGHT

Erin searches through files and pulls several cases of domestic violence. As she reviews the files, she reads variations of the same story; domestic disturbances, 911 calls, restraining orders, injuries and murders. She pores over photos of victims in life and death.

Nick Johnson, the prosecutor from the Cochran case, startles Erin when he enters the room; she spills the contents of one of the files.

JOHNSON

Whoa! Sorry! I didn't mean to scare you. Are you OK?

Erin crouches down, embarrassed, and hurries to gather the spilled documents and gruesome victim photographs.

ERIN

Yeah, I'm fine. Just caught me off guard there.

JOHNSON

What you up to? You're here awfully late.

ERIN

Just doing some research for a term paper.

JOHNSON

Wow! You know, you've really got an admirable work ethic. I wish I had my act together like that when I was in undergrad. I hear you want to be a prosecutor; you keep at it like this, and you'll do fine.

ERIN

Thanks; I will. I guess I should get going home. Class tomorrow.

JOHNSON

Hope those pictures don't bother you too much. Unfortunately it comes with the job.

ERIN

No, I'm OK with it.

JOHNSON

OK, take it easy, Erin. Good night.

Erin gathers her things and quickly re-files the folders in their cabinets. She reaches the hall, out of Johnson's view, and leaves quietly, relieved that no one else has seen her.

Johnson notices that Erin overlooked one folder in her haste.

JOHNSON
Hey Erin, you left one out...

Erin is gone; no answer.

JOHNSON
Erin?

Johnson carries the folder to its proper filing cabinet and notices that Erin failed to initial the tracking form on the folder when pulling it from the drawer. Johnson marks an "E.F." on the sheet and returns it to the cabinet.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CAMPUS BUILDING - EVENING

In the long shadows of a red Tucson sunset, Erin rides her bike up to the school building where she last saw Laura Carlson. She dismounts, locks the bike, and swings her backpack off her back and onto one shoulder. Erin walks inside.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - EVENING

Joe Jameson prepares his lecture notes as Erin enters the classroom door. He looks up at her, then follows Erin's eyes as she notes Laura Carlson's empty chair.

Erin finds her seat and meets Joe's eyes. They both look away, Erin diving into her backpack for a pen, Joe returning to his papers.

Joe begins class --

JOE
Professor Walters is sick, so he asked me to cover the lecture tonight. Before we start, though, I wanted to acknowledge the loss of one of our classmates, Laura Carlson. I'm sure you're familiar with the story of what happened from the news, but I don't know how well you knew her. Laura was a very promising student who was trying to make a better life for her and her children. I also want you to know that there are excellent campus counseling services that you can use free of charge.

(MORE)

JOE (cont'd)

If you don't know how to get ahold of them, feel free to see me anytime. Before we get going, are there any questions? OK, let's pick up where we left last week, on page 243...

After checking to see that no one is watching her, Erin wipes away a tear. Erin's gesture draws Joe's attention, but he looks away so as not to embarrass her.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMPUS BUILDING - NIGHT

Erin unlocks her bicycle as Joe exits the school building. He strides over as she stores the lock and throws her backpack over her shoulders.

JOE

Hi, Erin?

ERIN

Hi.

Joe extends his hand.

JOE

Joe.

ERIN

Yeah, I know. What's up?

JOE

Well, I don't mean to interfere, but it seemed that you and Laura were friends, and I was wondering how you were doing with all this.

ERIN

Thanks. That's nice of you. Um, it's been pretty hard. I went to her house the night before she was killed, and I saw her husband in court when he got his restraining order.

JOE

Oh; I'm really sorry.

ERIN

Yeah, me too. I feel awful for her little kids.

(MORE)

ERIN (cont'd)
Anyway, thanks for asking; that's
really thoughtful of you.

JOE
It's nothing. Uh, listen; I hope
this isn't weird, but would you
like to go somewhere and have a
drink and talk?

Erin looks around, surprised by the offer.

JOE
I'm sorry -- was that out of line?

Erin smiles sheepishly --

ERIN
No, no, you're not out of line.
You just surprised me. Yeah, that
would be fine. You mean now?

JOE
Uh, yeah; if that's OK.

ERIN
I have to work tomorrow, but we
could go sit for a while, sure.

JOE
How about Frog -- you know it?

ERIN
Sounds good.

JOE
I'll grab my car and meet you there
in ten minutes, OK?

ERIN
OK.

Erin mounts her bike and rides off to the bar.

CUT TO:

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

Erin and Joe sit at an outdoor patio table under tall palm
trees at an off-campus bar, drinking beer. Other students
sit at tables around them. Music plays from speakers mounted
in the trees.

JOE

So what made you want to join the Army? I don't know a lot of women who have done that.

ERIN

It's more common where I come from.

JOE

Where's that?

ERIN

A little town in central California, but what I mean is my family. A lot of Mexican-Americans go in the military after high school. I have about 10 cousins who have been in the military, half of them girls. It's a good way to get ahead when your parents don't make that much money. That's what's paying for my school. Besides, I wanted to do something for my country.

JOE

Did you think you'd end up in a war?

ERIN

I knew was possible. It was part of being a soldier, you know? That's what we do.

JOE

Well, it just seems that the Army hires people to do non-combat jobs and the next thing they know, they're in a war they didn't sign up for.

Erin smiles.

ERIN

Yeah, I've heard that. I don't know what Army those people were in, but I was taught there's no such thing as a non-combat soldier. Even if your job is pumping gas, your second job is infantry. We all get trained to fight, and we're all expected to fight. And that's good, because you want that training when the shooting starts.

JOE
Sorry. I didn't mean anything...

ERIN
I know you didn't. You didn't
offend me.

Joe carefully peels off the label of his beer as he looks in Erin's eyes.

JOE
So were you in combat?

ERIN
Once, yeah.

JOE
You mind telling me about it?

ERIN
Maybe later -- it's kind of hard to
talk about.

JOE
Sure. Sorry.

ERIN
No, it's OK. You want another
beer? I'll get this round.

JOE
Sure.

A WAITRESS approaches.

ERIN
Excuse me, can we get two more
here?

JOE
So you want to be a prosecutor?

ERIN
You must want to, you ask so many
questions. You tell me: do you
want to be a prosecutor?

JOE
I'm not sure yet. I'm lining up a
clerking job for next year, then
I'll see what I want to do after
that.

(MORE)

JOE (cont'd)
Generally I've focused on
constitutional law, but I'm also
considering doing some time as a
public defender.

ERIN
I couldn't do that.

JOE
No?

ERIN
Not after being a cop, and
especially after what happened to
Laura.

JOE
Man, I'm sorry, and here I was
trying to help you feel better.

ERIN
No, you are helping. And it's OK;
you need good people as P.D.s to
make the system work. I've
certainly seen that first hand in
my internship.

Joe takes a final tug on his empty beer.

JOE
OK, I'll do my best. Watch
yourself out there, or I'll
embarrass you.

ERIN
Bring it on, man.

The waitress brings their beers.

WAITRESS
Another hefeweizen, and another
Bass. That'll be six-fifty.

ERIN
I got that.

Erin hands the waitress some bills.

ERIN
Keep it, thanks.

WAITRESS
Thanks.

The waitress walks away, and Erin returns her eyes to Joe, who is admiring her.

ERIN

What?

JOE

You're something, you know that?

ERIN

What are you talking about?

JOE

You're just pretty amazing, if you don't mind my saying.

ERIN

Shut up and drink your beer, Jameson.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE THE BAR - NIGHT

Erin and Joe walk out of the bar and onto the sidewalk. Joe weaves slightly as they walk to Erin's bike.

ERIN

How are you getting home? Do you live far from here?

JOE

Not very -- I can drive.

ERIN

I've seen my share of DUIs, and you can't drive. I think that last hefe-what's-it got you.

JOE

Hefeweizen. I'm not that bad.

ERIN

No, you're not, but you don't want to push it. I'll drive your car. You said you're not far, right?

JOE

No, about a half mile.

ERIN

All right. Let's throw my bike in
your car and we'll get you home.

CUT TO:

EXT. JOE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Erin and Joe pull up to a small one-bedroom cottage similar to Erin's. Erin shuts off the car and gets out of the driver's seat as Joe pulls her bike from the car's trunk. He sets the bike on the sidewalk and lowers the kickstand.

JOE

Your ride, ma'am.

ERIN

Thanks. Your keys.

Erin puts the keys in Joe's hand. Joe puts his hand over hers and holds it. Erin pulls him to her, kissing him on the mouth. Joe drops the keys and puts his arms around her waist and back, returning her kisses. They pause, open their eyes, and kiss again, opening their mouths and holding each other closer.

A car drives by, causing Erin and Joe to stop. Joe picks up his keys and walks Erin's bike inside his fence gate.

ERIN

Oh, man...

Joe motions Erin into his yard.

JOE

Come on.

Erin, smiling with a little embarrassment, walks forward. Joe takes her hand, and the two walk up to his porch.

CUT TO:

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Erin and Joe stumble through the door, kissing. Without breaking their embrace, Joe shuts the front door with his foot and drops his keys.

Joe guides Erin backward toward his cluttered bedroom as she giggles through kisses to his face and neck. The two flop on the bed together, laughing, and kick off their shoes. Joe clears textbooks off the bed with a sweep of his arm.

Erin rolls onto one elbow next to Joe and kisses his mouth. She reaches for the top button of his shirt and opens it. She kisses down Joe's neck to his chest and opens another button, then another. Joe reaches out and gently runs his fingers through Erin's hair.

Erin kneels, unbuttons and takes off her top, leaving her thin cotton camisole to reflect a shaft of light from Joe's bathroom. Joe reaches up and pulls her down on top of him, caressing one of her breasts. She moans softly and kisses him deeply.

Joe reaches down between them and unsnaps the button on Erin's pants. He runs his hand under the waistband and over her hips as she lifts them to allow him to hike her pants down in one fluid movement.

Erin grinds into Joe's body as she kisses him. Their hands flow over each other's skin.

Joe gently rolls Erin off of him. He wriggles out of his pants and lays on his side, stroking Erin's supine body. He lifts her camisole slightly, rubbing a nipple with the gathered fabric.

Erin looks at Joe through half-closed eyes, caressing his head as he kisses her neck and breasts. He moves on top of her, kissing her mouth again. Erin closes her eyes in anticipation --

In a flashback, an enraged Mark Carpenter looms over Erin as she struggles to escape his attack in the Iraqi night.

ERIN

Stop.

Erin pushes Joe away.

JOE

I'm sorry -- what, did I hurt you?

Erin sits up and kneels on the bed.

ERIN

Just stop.

Joe backs away, confused.

JOE

Erin, I'm sorry. What's wrong?

Erin recovers a bit, but keeps her distance warily.

ERIN

You didn't do anything wrong, it's me.

JOE

Can you tell me about it?

ERIN

I don't know.

Joe pulls the sheets up to offer Erin a cover-up. She takes it. He swings his legs over the side of the bed and pulls his pants back on. Joe then sits back against his headboard and listens to see if Erin wants to say something more.

ERIN

You know, I'm sorry. I don't mean to be weird.

JOE

You're not -- you've been through a lot. I...

ERIN

Joe, I like you, OK? I do.

Erin leans over and kisses him.

JOE

I like you, too. I think that comes across.

ERIN

You're really sweet. It's just that you're the first guy I've been with since...

JOE

It's OK, it's OK. You know, there's no rush. We just got a little ahead of things, OK?

Erin softens further, relieved. She lies back down with the sheets pulled up above her breasts.

ERIN

Can I just sleep over? It's like two and I'm really tired.

JOE

Absolutely. You want me to hit the couch?

ERIN
No. It's OK.

Joe curls up next to Erin. She reaches out, takes his hand, and closes her eyes. Joe watches her as her breathing slows and deepens. Once she's asleep, he too closes his eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - MORNING

Erin wakes up as a shaft of blazing Arizona sunlight marches across her face. Joe lies motionless in a deep sleep. Still dressed in her panties and camisole, Erin searches for her clothing in the unfamiliar daytime landscape of Joe's apartment.

Once dressed, she takes a last look at Joe before slipping out the door. The sound of the door closing wakes Joe. His eyes open to find Erin gone. He sits up, looks around for signs of her, and lies back down with a sigh.

CUT TO:

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - DAY

Erin walks in from work hot, sweaty, and tired from too little sleep the night before. She drops her backpack, walks to the refrigerator for a bottle of water, and flops down on a couch. She kicks off her shoes and picks up the phone to check her voicemail. Joe has left her a message:

JOE
(O.C.)
Hey, Erin, it's Joe. I didn't get your phone number last night, so if this isn't the Erin Fuentes I had drinks with last night, please accept my apologies. But if this is the right Erin, I'd really like to see you again soon. OK, I'll try you again later. Bye.

Erin, smiling, picks up the phone and dials Joe's number from the caller ID display on the handset. The phone rings.

JOE
(O.C.)
Hello?

ERIN
Hey, it's me. I got your call.

CUT TO:

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - DAY

Joe paces in his kitchen, trying not to betray his excitement at talking to Erin on the phone.

JOE

You did. Thanks for calling back.
I see that my hospitality sent you
scurrying out kind of early.

ERIN

(O.C.)

Your hospitality was great. I just
had to get to work. Consider
yourself lucky you got to sleep in
this morning. It was very, very
bright out there, let me tell you.
I'm so tired.

JOE

Then trying to get together tonight
is probably out of the question.
Can I take you to dinner on Friday?

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - DAY

Erin smiles, pacing her own floor.

ERIN

Dinner. Nice. Where?

JOE

(O.C.)

I'm making this up as I go along.
Why don't you meet me at the Frog
at seven, since you know how to get
there, and it'll be a surprise?

ERIN

That sounds good. I'll see you
then.

JOE

(O.C.)

Great. Get some sleep, OK?

ERIN

Definitely, A.S.A.P.

JOE

(O.C.)

OK, bye.

ERIN

Bye.

Erin hangs up the phone, takes a long tug on her drink, and pulls herself up from the couch to get out of her work clothes and into the shower.

CUT TO:

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - DAY

Joe ends the call, sets the handset down on his kitchen counter, and performs a mock series of martial arts punches in the air to celebrate his success in getting the date with Erin.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BAR - EVENING

Joe waits for Erin, dressed in pressed khaki slacks and a dress shirt, on the sidewalk near the entrance to the bar. He looks at his watch to make sure he's not late, then scans up and down the sidewalk looking for his date.

Erin approaches out of the sunset, orange sunlight painting a halo around her auburn hair and making her pale cotton dress glow. Joe stands quietly for a beat, taken with Erin's beauty.

ERIN

So where are we going?

JOE

Uh, Jason's, just down the street.

ERIN

You going to be all right?

JOE

Yes. You look great.

ERIN

Thank you. You look pretty nice yourself. That way?

JOE

Yeah. OK, I'm recovering now.

The couple walks off together.

EXT. PATIO RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Erin and Joe sit at a table for two in the courtyard of Jason's restaurant. The awkwardness of their previous date is gone, and the two share long looks into each other's eyes as they talk, laugh, drink wine, and occasionally eat some of their meal.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The couple leaves the restaurant hand in hand. Erin and Joe walk down the street, and when they come under the darkness of a tree, Joe steals a kiss. Erin returns it, caressing Joe's face and neck with both hands.

JOE

You want me to walk you to your car?

ERIN

I want you to take me home.

They kiss again, then walk on.

CUT TO:

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Bodies entwined on Joe's bed, Erin strokes Joe's neck as he kisses her breasts. She pulls his head up to face her.

JOE

Yes?

Erin looks at him and reaches down to guide him to her. Joe moves tentatively at first, gently, until she pulls him deeper.

Erin kisses Joe passionately, holding his face as he drives harder and faster. She lays her head back on the pillow as he gently bites at her neck and ear.

CUT TO:

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Later, Joe sleeps peacefully, his body curled around Erin's, but Erin's eyes remain open, staring beyond the room's walls at something far away.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Erin arrives at work and makes her way through the halls of the courthouse to her office. People mill about in the corridor and talk animatedly. Erin sees Harvey, who walks over.

HARVEY

Another murder -- a woman who got a restraining order from your judge just a month ago. Sarah Cochran was her name.

ERIN

Oh, no.

HARVEY

(looking away)

The boyfriend did it, of course. They'll be bringing him down in about 20 minutes -- Erin?

Erin walks away from Harvey, the look of fear on Sarah Cochran's face still fresh in her memory.

Judge Martinez ducks Harvey and other reporters on her way to court. Erin tries to follow the judge; Martinez and Erin's eyes meet for a moment, but Martinez turns away and quickens her pace to get away from the intern.

Erin is overwhelmed by emotion. She rushes out of the building wiping tears out of her eyes, jumps on her mountain bike, and pedals away as fast as she can.

CUT TO:

EXT. ARIZONA DESERT - DAY

Still in her work clothes, Erin rides hard on her mountain bike to leave the city behind. She finally stops, dismounts, opens her water bottle to take a drink, and breaks down again, sobbing. She lets the bicycle fall and walks in a lazy circle, crying and trying to catch her breath from the ride and her anguish.

Erin recalls images of the violence she can't escape:

Ponce hit, lying limp in his turret;

Erin leaping into action to defend her comrades, firing with deadly efficiency;

A mortally wounded Iraqi trying to crawl away as blood flows from the bullet hole in his head;

Laura Carlson's children sitting quietly in front of their mother's casket;

The tearful, grateful look on Sarah Cochran's face.

She pulls out her cell phone and dials Joe's number. The phone rings, but Joe doesn't answer. Erin shuts the cell phone off when the voice mail prompt comes on.

CUT TO:

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Erin enters the university's library and makes her way to a collection of U.S. Government publications. She finds a series of Army field manuals -- "Infantry Tactics," "Urban Operations," among others -- and burns photocopies of some chapters as she scours others for key information.

CUT TO:

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - EVENING

Erin pores over the copied Army manual pages at a table, lingering over diagrams and text passages about how to kill people at great distances:

"Consideration has to be made for wind speed and air temperature, especially beyond 500 meters."

"Stability of the weapon's barrel becomes critical..."

"Successful sniper operations depend on both cover and concealment of firing positions."

Erin studies a diagram of a man's body in a rifle scope's crosshairs when the phone rings. The sudden noise causes her to jump with a start. She covers the pages as though someone might be able to see her through the telephone. She picks up the phone.

ERIN

Hello?

CUT TO:

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - EVENING

Joe smiles at Erin's voice on the other end of the phone.

JOE

Hey, you sound like you just got back from a bike ride.

ERIN

(O.C.)

No, I just had to run for the phone.

JOE

You want to get together tonight? Maybe we could go see a movie. They're playing North by Northwest at the campus theater.

ERIN

(O.C.)

I'm sorry, I just have a lot of homework tonight, and I'm working tomorrow. I would if I could...

Joe tries to mask his disappointment, pacing the floor.

JOE

No, that's OK. I understand. Maybe later in the week.

ERIN

(O.C.)

Yeah. Let's talk later.

JOE

OK. Bye.

CUT TO:

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - EVENING

Erin hesitates, suddenly worried about how she has left things.

ERIN

Joe?

JOE

(O.C.)

Yeah?

ERIN

Thanks for calling. I'll talk to you soon, OK?

JOE

(O.C.)

Sure -- sounds good. See you later.

ERIN

OK. Bye.

Erin lingers over the phone as she hangs it up, then returns to her work at the table.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTHOUSE FILE ROOM - DAY

Erin pulls a file from a stack of domestic violence cases. She spreads it open on top of a filing cabinet and takes notes in the same notebook she used at the library. Erin jots down the particulars of the case as she reviews police reports, court transcripts, and photos of a bruised and bloodied woman's face. She focuses on key phrases in the documents:

"Contusions on forehead, possible fracture of sinus cavity..."

In a flashback, a man slams a woman's face into a wall.

"911 call, 0136 hours, 23 January 2003..."

The same woman, dressed in different clothes on another occasion, shouts into her telephone as a man pounds on the locked door of their disheveled bedroom. Her words play on the 911 tape as written in the transcript:

"...he's going to kill me!"

More documents:

"Child Protective Services Report...two children in foster care..."

The woman watches from her front door as her children are taken from her home for their safety.

"No charges filed..."

"Request for restraining order, 12 April 2004..."

Erin lingers at last on a mug shot of the man. His name is Steven Petersen. The mug shot is attached to the restraining order that keeps him 200 yards away from his estranged wife, Susan Petersen. The document lists his address and that of his wife. Erin finishes her notes and returns the files to the cabinet.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMPUS BUILDING - NIGHT

Erin hurries out of the school building after class in a group of students and unlocks her bike. Joe follows out of the building, trying not to betray his relationship Erin to her classmates.

JOE

Hey, Erin.

ERIN

Hi, Joe.

JOE

Can I talk to you for a minute?

Joe motions her over underneath a tree, out of the glare of a streetlight.

ERIN

Here?

JOE

Not necessarily. We could go to my place, or yours, or...

ERIN

Tonight really isn't good.

JOE

Am I missing something?

ERIN

No, you're not. I'm sorry, I know I haven't been keeping in touch. I'm just really busy with work and school right now. Like you said, we should just take it slow, you know?

JOE

Oh, OK. I didn't know we were still...

ERIN

Taking it slow?

JOE

Yeah.

ERIN

Well, it's probably a good idea.
Get to know each other, not get too
intense right away. This still
isn't that easy for me, you know?

JOE

OK, I didn't know that, but thanks
for telling me. There's no hurry.

ERIN

Thanks for understanding. It
helps.

JOE

So, I'll see you sometime soon.

ERIN

Yeah, soon.

JOE

OK.

Erin looks around to make sure no one is watching them and
kisses Joe on the cheek.

ERIN

OK. Thanks.

Erin walks off to retrieve her bike.

JOE

Bye.

Joe lingers, watching her leave, thoroughly confused and
disappointed.

CUT TO:

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

In her darkened bedroom, Erin sleeps fitfully on her bed,
dreaming.

CUT TO:

EXT. ERIN'S DREAM - DAY

In her dream, Erin again encounters the Iraqi fighters in the
desert. Rogers is there, in the five-ton, then a blast, and
he's gone, replaced by a gaping hole in the truck cab; Ponce
slumps forward in the turret of the Hummer, shot by the
Iraqis. Erin fumbles with her weapon, trying to load the
grenade into its launcher.

Again Erin shoots the Iraqis, again they bleed, writhe on the ground, and die.

White men from the mug shots -- Jacob Carlson, Steven Petersen -- intermingle with the Iraqis, but they do not fall under Erin's fire. They walk out of the firefight, laughing, and kick the limp body of a woman lying on the ground. Carlson pulls a pistol from his belt and levels it at the head of the woman --

CUT TO:

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

ERIN

No!

Erin opens her eyes. She rolls over and tries to go back to sleep, but her eyes open again.

Erin sits up, turns on a light, and walks to the table to review her notes again. She stares at the face of Steven Petersen in the mug shot.

CUT TO:

INT. DISCOUNT STORE - DAY

Erin enters a large, dark blue department store. An older woman with tobacco-aged skin and a badge-festooned vest welcomes Erin to the store.

Erin ignores the woman and heads for the firearms section. She looks at several rifles in a display case and finally settles on a light hunting rifle with a scope.

A CLERK

A twenty-something heavysset young man with a store uniform vest over a white polo shirt approaches, a look of slightly puzzled amusement on his face. He doesn't get a lot of female customers, and he doesn't want to lose this opportunity to flirt with a pretty girl.

CLERK

Looking to do some hunting? Good time for quail right now.

ERIN

Oh, no, not me. I'm looking for a gift for my boyfriend. Could I see this one?

Defeated, the clerk unlocks the case and pulls the gun out. He hands it to Erin.

CLERK

It's a little light, but it'll get the job done.

Erin inspects the rifle's chamber to make sure it's not loaded. She points the rifle to the sky and expertly pulls the butt into her shoulder, just as she practiced so many times in the Army. She looks through the scope, pulls the trigger, and hears a metal click as the hammer falls.

The clerk's puzzlement deepens, but he keeps quiet.

ERIN

I'll take it. Cash OK?

CUT TO:

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - EVENING

Erin hurriedly fills her backpack in her dimly lit living room. The phone rings, startling her. She lets it ring twice, three times before stopping her work and walking to the handset to check the Caller ID display:

"JAMESON JOSEPH - 555-243-6532"

Erin hesitates for a moment, starts to pick up the phone, and then sets it back down. She finishes packing the bag, turns out the lights, and walks out the back door into the night.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN DESERT - NIGHT

Erin looks down through binoculars at the home of SUSAN PETERSEN from her perch on a brushy desert hillside dotted with saguaro cactus. Susan's home is nearly identical to the other 1970s-vintage one-story ramblers that make up a neighborhood built up to the edge of the hill. Roofs painted white or silver to cut the heat of the brutal Arizona sun reflect the cool glow of a full moon.

Unaware of her guardian outside, Susan stands by a kitchen window, washing dishes from dinner. As Susan finishes the dishes, Erin watches her turn off the kitchen lights and move into the adjoining living room. Susan turns on a television and closes the living room curtains.

Erin puts down the binoculars, sits up, and stretches her stiff muscles.

Checking her watch -- it's 11:12 -- she decides to pack up and head home from her self-appointed guard duty.

Erin begins to disassemble her rifle when a light flashes on at Susan's house, drawing Erin's attention. She picks up the binoculars and scans the house for signs of trouble. As Erin focuses the binoculars on the house, a man is briefly bathed in the bright glare of the outdoor floodlight activated by his motion.

Erin puts the binoculars down. She scrambles to pick up and reassemble her rifle, takes up a firing position, and peers through the powerful scope to get a better view of the man. Erin loses the man for a moment in the dark, then reacquires her target as he moves toward the back of the house.

Erin strains to hold the scope still enough to see the man's face clearly. Holding her breath for a beat, the image in the scope stabilizes, making it clear Erin is aiming at STEVEN PETERSEN, the face in the rifle scope a match with the mug shot from the courthouse file. The stalker scurries to move out of the light.

Erin chambers a round in her rifle and follows Petersen with the scope. Alerted by the light outside the window, Susan Petersen peers outside but sees no sign of her estranged husband now crouched almost out of the light cast by the outdoor floodlight.

Erin takes aim at Steven Petersen, then hesitates. She looks at her cell phone; she could call 911 --

CUT TO:

EXT. IRAQI DESERT - NIGHT

In a flashback, Erin weeps as she makes her way back to the Army camp after Mark Carpenter's attack.

Carpenter suddenly catches up to her, knocking her down flat on her face. He yanks her uniform blouse up over her shoulders, immobilizing and blinding her at the same time.

Carpenter pulls out a bayonet from his belt scabbard and splits the back of Erin's uniform trousers. He leans over her prone body and touches the point of the bayonet to her bare back.

CARPENTER

You say one fucking word and I'll gut you.

Erin's sobs are muffled by the blouse over her head as Carpenter yanks her trousers down over her hips --

CUT TO:

EXT. ARIZONA DESERT - NIGHT

Recovering from her flashback, Erin looks again through her rifle scope, sets the crosshairs on Petersen's side -- center mass, just like Army target training -- and squeezes the trigger.

A single shot cracks with a flash from the gun's muzzle, throws the barrel of the rifle up, and kicks Erin's shoulder back. Recovering from the recoil, Erin pulls the rifle bolt back to eject a smoking spent shell casing and rams home a fresh round. She trains the scope on Petersen again.

Petersen lies motionless, crumpled in a half crouch -- he died instantly, giving him no chance to move out of his position. Erin looks through the scope at the dead body for a few seconds, not sure if she might have missed, then sees lights flickering on as Susan Petersen emerges from her door to investigate the commotion outside her house.

Erin picks up her rifle and binoculars, collects the spent shell casing from her shot, and backs away from her sniper's nest.

As Erin slips into the desert night, Susan Petersen discovers her dead husband, covers her mouth, and screams.

CUT TO:

INT. ERIN'S HOME - NIGHT

Erin draws the curtains in her living room and pulls the disassembled rifle out of her backpack. She takes out a cloth to remove powder residue and wipe the weapon clean of fingerprints.

Erin showers, desperate to wash away her horrible act. She suddenly doubles over in the shower and vomits.

Later, Erin lies in bed, staring at the ceiling.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Erin walks to the courthouse the next day through the loud generator noise of television remote vans parked outside. Reporters and news camera crews ignore the young intern as she walks past them into the building.

Erin hasn't slept and it shows in her tired eyes, but she is still neatly dressed as usual.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

The halls buzz with talk of Petersen's killing. Erin pauses to take a drink from a water fountain and overhears Harvey's conversation nearby with A LAWYER.

HARVEY

The son-of-a-bitch got what he deserved, don't you think? He was about to kill her, that's pretty clear.

LAWYER

I suppose, yeah.

HARVEY

You suppose right. The thing I can't figure is who would have done it? Who would have known that he was coming? Who would have sat out there and watched her house?

Harvey notices Erin. A little embarrassed at being caught listening in, Erin averts her eyes and walks toward her office.

HARVEY

(to lawyer)

Hey, I'll catch up with you later, OK?

Harvey walks over to Erin. She tries to avoid Harvey's glance but can't duck into her office fast enough.

HARVEY

Hey, Erin.

ERIN

You know I can't talk about cases with you, Rick. Now I need to get to work.

Erin walks on as Harvey follows.

HARVEY

I didn't say I was writing anything. I wouldn't put you on the record without asking you first. That's not the way I work.

Erin stops and softens a bit.

ERIN

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to snap at you. This is all very upsetting, and I do have a lot of work to do. I'll see you later, OK?

HARVEY

OK; you all right?

ERIN

Yeah, I'm fine. I'm just not used to dealing with so much death. It's been an awful spell lately.

HARVEY

Yeah, I know. Let me know if you need somebody to talk to; strictly off the record, OK?

ERIN

OK. Thanks.

Erin turns and walks away as Harvey, slightly puzzled by Erin's behavior, watches her for a moment, then chats up another lawyer in the hall.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ERIN'S HOME - NIGHT

Erin reviews notes from another file filled with familiar details of emergency call transcripts, doctors' reports, and restraining orders. She lingers over a photocopied mug shot of JEFFREY GARTEN, estranged boyfriend and serial stalker. Erin packs her disassembled rifle into the backpack and heads for the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT SUBURBS - NIGHT

Erin stands on the driver's side of her car just off a flat dirt frontage road near a highway. The car is obscured from view by a small stand of thorny palo verde trees.

Erin's rifle rests on her backpack on the hood of her car as she looks through binoculars at a run-down trailer park in the distance. She scans the open windows of Jeffrey Garten's doublewide trailer for signs of activity. She sees no movement inside and considers moving to another position when a figure walks through a room.

Erin scans quickly to adjacent windows to identify the figure. It's Garten, lit by a lamp he switches on in a bedroom.

Erin picks up her rifle and leans over the hood of the car, laying the rifle on the backpack to stabilize her aim. She trains her scope on the bedroom and studies Garten's face through the crosshairs as he looks for something in a dresser. She must be sure he is the same man whose mug shot she committed to memory. She recalls the text of the blotter reports:

"...alleges series of intimidating telephone calls..."

"...said he'd kill me if I didn't see him again..."

In a flashback, GARTEN yells into his phone.

"...drunken rage..."

In another flashback, Garten bursts through a front door, throws a woman to the ground, and beats her with his fists as she tries to break free.

"Contusions on face, arms, and neck..."

Erin remembers the photos of the bruised, frightened faces Garten terrorized, then settles again on Garten's blank, probably drunk expression in his mug shot. No question: it's him.

Erin lowers the rifle barrel slowly until the crosshairs reach the middle of Garten's bare chest. She takes in a breath, exhales halfway, and holds her breath as she squeezes the trigger.

Garten turns and begins to walk out of the bedroom before the rifle's hammer falls. Erin releases the trigger slowly and allows herself to fully exhale. She blinks her eyes and stretches her neck muscles, readjusts her rifle grip, and tries to find Garten in the lit windows of the mobile home.

Erin sees a figure walk past the living room window. Afraid to lose the shot, she takes quick aim and squeezes the trigger. Just before the hammer drops, Erin realizes she's aiming at the chest of a boy. She jerks the barrel reflexively.

The shot goes just wide of the boy's body. A glass of milk on a table behind the boy explodes in a white mist as the dry crack of the shot echoes through the trailer park. Lights flicker on in nearby trailers, and dogs begin barking loudly.

Erin sits, stunned for a moment at the realization that she almost killed a child. She snaps out of her daze as Garten emerges from his front door with a pistol.

Garten waves the weapon back and forth in the general direction of Erin's gunfire. The boy screams behind the closed screen door as Garten swears at the boy and motions him to get back in the house.

It becomes clear to Erin that Garten has indeed been drinking as his file said he did all too often: he clumsily tries to conceal himself in the shadows, out of the orange bath of his front porch bug light.

Erin tracks him anyway. As Garten crouches to find his assailant in the darkness, Erin takes in a breath and draws her crosshairs down Garten's face, past his throat, to his solar plexus. Erin begins to exhale, pauses, and smoothly pulls back on the trigger.

Erin's muzzle flash and the recoil of the rifle obscure her view of Garten. By the time she refocuses on her target, she sees Garten's lifeless body halfway submerged in a bush in front of his house. Erin hears the boy scream as the ringing in her ears from the gunshot subsides. She also hears sirens as she quickly collects the two spent cartridges the rifle ejected to the ground.

Erin looks back at the scene as she drives, headlights off, into the dark. The lights of police cruisers converge on Garten's house. She drives faster down the dirt road toward the highway under a bright moon; the boy's screams, the chorus of barking dogs, and the police sirens fade in the distance.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. OPEN-AIR BEACH RESTAURANT - DAY

Troy Harris, retired U.S. Army drill sergeant, chews a bite of his chicken sandwich as he sits with other lunchtime patrons at the bar. A TV mounted above the bar plays CNN. Harris takes a swig from a bottle of beer as a story about a vigilante sniper begins.

THE BAR REGULAR

A middle-aged LUNCH PATRON, freshly sunburned to a deep red in a tank top and shorts, sits next to Harris eating a burger and drinking a beer. He gestures to the TV --

LUNCH PATRON

Have you seen this? I say more power to him. Fuckers get what they deserve.

HARRIS

No, what is it?

LUNCH PATRON

You'll see; Tony, turn it up!

On the bar TV, a CNN REPORTER continues his report from the steps in front of the Pima County courthouse; the caption at the bottom of the screen reads "Sniper Justice?"

CNN REPORTER

Two men with long histories of domestic violence have been shot to death here in Tucson in recent days, apparently by the same assailant, in what local observers are calling a case of vigilante justice. Police are looking for a shooter who apparently used a high-powered rifle to kill Steven Petersen last Thursday night...

A mug shot of Petersen appears on screen, followed by images of police and emergency workers removing Petersen's body from the crime scene.

CNN REPORTER

...then shot and killed Jeffrey Garten last night. In the most recent attack, Garten's 10-year-old son was almost killed when the shooter fired a bullet into Garten's home just before the man was gunned down in his front yard.

As Harris watches, Erin walks out of the courthouse and into the CNN picture behind the reporter. At first unsure of what he sees, Harris confirms his first impression as the young woman walks down the courthouse steps and out of the shot -- it is Erin in the video.

CNN REPORTER

Now, the police are telling us the victims did not know each other, had no mutual acquaintances, and lived in different parts of this southwestern desert community. It seems the only thing the two had in common was their history of domestic violence.

(MORE)

CNN REPORTER (cont'd)

Garten had a record as a stalker who had beaten several ex-girlfriends, including the mother of the boy who was nearly killed last night

LUNCH PATRON

I say give the guy a medal; the courts aren't keeping these shitbirds off the street. (to bartender) Hey, Tony, can you get ESPN on here?

HARRIS

No, wait, just a moment, please.

CNN REPORTER

As police search for a motive, the community is divided over whether the killer is a murderer or a hero dispensing justice the courts haven't delivered.

The CNN report cuts to a series of man-in-the-street interviews. The first interview is with a very tan CONSTRUCTION WORKER in sunglasses, a baseball cap, and a dusty T-shirt.

MAN IN THE STREET

It's wrong, of course, but I do think this guy kept those two from hurting somebody else.

A STUDENT dressed in a University of Arizona T-shirt, sunglasses, and a baseball cap adorned with his fraternity's Greek letters is next.

ANOTHER MAN IN THE STREET

Maybe people'll think twice before they smack their women around.

The last interview is with a woman in her early fifties, also quite tan, with long gray hair pulled back in a ponytail. An affected desert bohemian, she stands in front of her custom jewelry boutique wearing hammered silver earrings and a matching silver neckpiece to complement her turquoise peasant blouse and blue jean ensemble.

WOMAN IN THE STREET

Killing is wrong, period. This guy should leave it to the courts. He's just as wrong as they are.

The report returns to the reporter standing on the courthouse steps.

CNN REPORTER

Preliminary theories about a suspect, and police here stress "preliminary," are that the gunman could be someone with a background in law enforcement. Whoever it is, police say it's clear the killer has experience handling weapons, given the precision of the sniper-style shootings. Back to you, Susan.

LUNCH PATRON

(to Harris)

Give him a fucking medal, I'm serious. Hey, OK if I catch up on the baseball scores now?

Harris breaks his intense focus on the CNN report to acknowledge the man.

HARRIS

Yes, I'm sorry. Please go ahead.

Curious about the possible connection between his former trainee and the murders, Harris pays his bill and walks away without waiting for his change. The man at the bar gives Harris a quizzical look as he walks away, as does the bartender who got a twelve-dollar tip on an eight-dollar bill. Both men forget about the man walking purposefully away, however, as the "play of the day" report begins on TV.

CUT TO:

INT. TUCSON POLICE HEADQUARTERS - DAY

It is already a busy morning in the downtown police headquarters booking room, especially so because officers are juggling the many phone tips coming in on the sniper. Citizens waiting to make complaints or offer information on the crime, many of them indigent street people, mentally ill, or both, sit in a waiting area watching the CNN report on a television set bolted to the ceiling.

THE DETECTIVE

DAVE BERNARD makes his way through the waiting area and enters an office just off the booking room. Dressed in a polo shirt and khakis, the muscular and tanned 33-year-old detective turns off the TV his partner is watching in the office as the CNN report ends.

Bernard runs a hand over the short haircut he acquired as a Navy corpsman and kept after he left the service. He hands a cup of coffee to his partner.

DAVE

Well, we've certainly got the usual dipshits riled up out there, looking for reward money. Ready to shoot me for pushing the CNN idea? Think we'll get anything from this?

BOB ARCHER loosens the bolo tie laced around the collar of his short-sleeve powder blue dress shirt as he has at more or less the same time every morning for the past 25 years he has spent on the force.

BOB

Hmmm...I've seen nothing like this one. I was betting on the dope angle, but that got shot to shit last night. So I'm open to anything at this point.

DAVE

Yeah, Petersen did piss off about every dealer in the valley at one point or another. But from what I could tell at the scene last night, Garten's just a drunk asshole who beats on his girlfriend.

BOB

Like I said, I'm open to suggestions.

DAVE

Nothing's jumping out at me from the internal affairs stuff. A few guys got into fights over the last year, and two got popped on domestic disturbances, but that doesn't really track with this guy; he's killing stalkers. That leaves cops with military training. You know how many guys that applies to?

Bob points to the Marine Corps globe and anchor tattooed on his forearm.

DAVE

Right. Just about everybody. We're fucked.

BOB

I just talked to ballistics, which is for shit. This guy's cut the tips of his rounds so you can't get a decent read on the slugs. They basically shatter on impact. This guy's not fucking around.

DAVE

So we're left with the shitheads.

BOB

Your shitheads.

DAVE

Right. Might as well get started.

Dave opens the door to the boisterous waiting area, sighs, and calls the first waiting tipster.

DAVE

Mr. Jansen?

A DERELICT

MR. JANSEN, a filthy man who hasn't shaved or changed clothes in weeks, coughs loudly and pulls himself to his feet. He walks into Dave's office, overwhelming the detective with his stench. Dave shuts the door behind him.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ERIN'S DREAM - NIGHT

The same dream, different night: Erin relives her battle in the Iraqi desert. The five-ton truck burns, its crew dead or cowering. Ponce hangs in his turret, apparently dead; Jenkins struggles to control his fear. Only Erin can keep them alive.

Men fall through her rifle sights one after another. The dead lie as they fell on the desert floor: some ground face first into the dirt, others staring aimlessly skyward like blind men.

Now the Arizona battle: Erin surges backward with the recoil of her rifle and surveys the impact of her bullets on the Arizona men she killed. She sees the boy she nearly killed, feels herself squeeze the trigger --

CUT TO:

INT. ERIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Erin wakes from her dream, breathing hard. She sits up and looks at the clock: 3:22 A.M. She lies down for a moment, but after so many sleepless nights, she knows it's pointless to try to go back to bed. She walks to her kitchen table and looks over the mug shot and crime report of her next victim.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HARRIS' APARTMENT - DAY

Harris sits at his computer by an open window and looks out at the beach town he has made his home. He has printed a number of news stories about the killing and others about his former trainee's heroism in Iraq. The articles about Erin mostly recount the facts of the Iraq incident; several note that she received the Silver Star, one features her basic training photo. Harris lingers over the picture, shot against an American flag backdrop, of the smart but unsure girl he watched become a poised soldier after just ten weeks of basic training.

Harris looks up Erin's number on an Internet search page; he picks up the phone and dials her number. The voice of an automated voice mail greeting offers to take a message for the number dialed. No Erin, not even a confirmation that he got the right number. Harris considers leaving a message, but abruptly hangs up. He checks the number, dials again, and gets the same computer greeting.

Harris hangs up and turns to his computer. Frustrated at his failure to connect with Erin, he again enters a web search on the sniper attacks in Tucson.

A number of hits come up and Harris skims through a series of articles recounting the same basic story told by the CNN TV report: pictures of the dead men, the dead men's victims.

Harris stops on a different picture, this one from the local Tucson newspaper's web site. In the picture, Steven Petersen stands before Judge Martinez in Pima County court receiving his restraining order. Sitting in the gallery, partially obscured by Petersen, is Erin.

Harris opens a new browser window and pulls up an airline reservation web page. He types in a departure from Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, destination Tucson, Arizona.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Erin, wet hair pulled into a ponytail, rushes into Judge Martinez' courtroom as Martinez settles in to preside over a new case. Martinez shoots Erin a glare as Erin hurriedly walks past the prosecution and defense teams to find a seat and set up her laptop.

Martinez tries to ignore her, but Erin drops a textbook from her backpack that lands with a loud thud, causing everyone in court to turn and look at Erin. Martinez gives one last angry look at her intern and launches into the proceedings:

MARTINEZ

Now that we're all here, what do we have?

PROSECUTOR

People of Pima County vs.
Henderson, your honor.

MARTINEZ

Very well. Proceed.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTHOUSE - EVENING

Erin rushes out of the courtroom with her computer and books bundled in her arms. Martinez emerges from another courtroom door and blocks Erin's path.

MARTINEZ

A word, Erin.

Erin follows Martinez into the judge's chambers. Once inside and behind closed doors, Martinez pivots and faces Erin. The disheveled and drawn woman in front of the judge is a shadow of the aspiring lawyer she hired just months ago.

MARTINEZ

Young lady, what's going on here?
You've been late every day for a
week, and this display today is
simply unacceptable.

Erin faces straight ahead, avoiding Martinez' eyes.

ERIN

You're right, ma'am, there's no
excuse for it.

MARTINEZ

But what's wrong? This isn't like you.

ERIN

How would you know what I'm like?

MARTINEZ

Excuse me? I'm trying to help here.

ERIN

I'm sorry. Can I go now?

MARTINEZ

No, you can't. I don't understand what's going on, and I do want to help, but I also need you to do your job reliably.

ERIN

Maybe I need to find another job. Can I go?

MARTINEZ

That's not what I mean, wait a minute, OK? I know something is bothering you. You look like you're not getting enough sleep. Is it the death of your classmate?

Erin allows herself to make eye contact.

ERIN

No...yes, in a way. I just haven't been feeling myself lately; it's personal. You know, you've been great, so I don't blame you for getting upset. I just need to take care of this myself.

Erin turns and walks away.

MARTINEZ

My door is always open. And we have counselors for staff if you want one. Just let me know. But I need you here on time, understand? Erin?

There is no answer; Erin is gone. Martinez, worried by Erin's increasingly erratic behavior, closes her office door and walks to her office window to watch Erin ride away on her bike into the deepening twilight.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Detective Bernard enters the main lobby and makes his way to the court's records office. A fortyish Latina COURT CLERK greets him from behind the office's main counter.

CLERK

Hi. You the guy who called? Come this way. It's in here.

DAVE

Thanks.

CLERK

So what are you hoping to find?

DAVE

Pretty much anything at this point.

The clerk walks the detective into the same file room Erin visited before her killings.

DAVE

You've pulled the files on the Petersen and Garten restraining orders?

CLERK

Right; just over here...

The clerk motions to two files, then to another, taller stack of files.

CLERK

...and these are all the restraining orders put out within the last six months. Have fun. Let me know if there's anything else I can get you.

The clerk walks out and shuts the file room door behind her as the policeman begins reading through the pile of paperwork.

CUT TO:

EXT. TUCSON NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Erin runs through an alley behind a row of run-down ranch-style cottages. Dogs bark at her, marking her passage through each animal's territory.

Backyard floodlights on motion detector switches flash on, chasing Erin with shafts of light through dilapidated slat fences.

Sirens blare in the distance, getting closer. Erin nears the end of the alley. She is just a few steps away from her waiting car.

Erin slides abruptly to a dead stop and ducks down behind a large plastic trash can. A police car trolls slowly past the alley opening.

A POLICEMAN

Sitting at the wheel of the police cruiser, a young, clean-shaven Tucson police officer shines a floodlight down the alley. He listens with his window open to the barking dogs. He lingers for a moment, shines the light on Erin's car and others parked on the residential street, and then moves on.

Erin creeps forward from her hiding spot, checks to make sure the street is clear, and dashes for her parked car. She closes the door quickly, flings her backpack in the back seat, and crouches in the driver's seat. Sure that no one has seen her, Erin starts the car and drives away into the night.

CUT TO:

EXT. CRIME SCENE - NIGHT

Detective Bernard and his partner arrive at the scene of another shooting in an unmarked police cruiser. Several squad cars are parked in front of a small bungalow. Paramedics remove the covered body of Erin's latest victim and load it into a waiting ambulance.

THE VICTIMS

Police car headlights silhouette the stream of policemen and emergency personnel filing in and out of the house onto the faces of a shattered family. The murdered man's wife sobs between drags on a cigarette, her tears rolling down over a black eye.

The couple's two CHILDREN -- an EIGHT-YEAR-OLD BOY and a SIX-YEAR-OLD GIRL -- sit a few feet away with a police counselor and watch the scene with blank stares, alone in the swirl of adult activity as Laura Carlson's children were at their mother's funeral.

TV REPORTERS

Three local news teams cover the event with simultaneous live stand-ups. The reporters line up next to each other to allow each team the same view of the horror. The reporters' accounts are practically interchangeable as they each use slightly different words to tell the same story.

FIRST REPORTER

Jim and Sue, the sniper has struck again, killing a man who was violating his restraining order by coming to the home of his estranged wife...

SECOND REPORTER

...as sometimes happens in these cases, neighbors tell us the dead man's estranged wife had actually invited the man to the house a few days ago to try to work out their differences, but the couple had had a loud fight, leaving the woman with a prominent black eye. Now behind me you can see paramedics removing the body of...

THIRD REPORTER

...and of course, the impact on the children, who you can see are being helped by a police social worker...

Dave walks across the street from the house to find firing positions the killer might have used. Bob strides past the dead man's family to inspect a single bullet hole in a window. He lines up the hole with blood sprayed on an interior wall, then does an about face to trace the bullet's trajectory. It leads to the street, or maybe to an alley entrance that faces the house.

Dave and Bob meet to compare notes in the middle of the weed-strewn patch of dirt that passes for a front yard.

BOB

The shooter wasn't as far off this time; maybe he drove up.

DAVE

Copycat?

BOB

No, it's our same guy. He's killing wife beaters exclusively, and I make that bullet hole for the same caliber as the others.

DAVE

Yeah?

BOB

We'll have to wait for the ballistics, if they can find anything decent to examine, but yeah, I'm pretty sure. Definitely shot at closer range than the others, though.

Dave looks back at the children.

DAVE

You think they're better off?

BOB

Who? Oh, the kids?

DAVE

Yeah.

BOB

Looking at this guy's record, I'd say he'd keep punching the woman until the boy grew old enough to beat the shit out of the old man or start beating up his own girlfriends. Yeah, I suppose they're better off. But just barely. Those are going to be some fucked up kids.

DAVE

We gotta get this guy. Getting in closer like this, he's committed.

BOB

Yes he is. He's not going to stop; he's righteous.

DAVE

All right, I've seen enough. You?

BOB
Yeah. Let's get out of here. You
want to review the files again?

DAVE
Got any better ideas?

BOB
No.

DAVE
OK. I'm going to get a few hours
of sleep then I'll see you over
there.

BOB
I'll get started and head home once
you get in. Take the car; I'll get
a ride with one of these guys.

DAVE
All right. I'll see ya.

BOB
Right.

Bob walks back to the house to talk to the coroner as Dave
heads to the cruiser.

CUT TO:

EXT. ERIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Joe sits on the hood of his car in front of Erin's house as
she drives up. Erin shuts off the ignition and kills the
headlights of her car.

She leaves the backpack, its contents pungent with the smell
of gunpowder, in the back seat and steps out of the vehicle.
Joe stays put.

Erin approaches Joe.

ERIN
Hi.

JOE
Hi.

ERIN
I wasn't expecting you.

JOE
No, I didn't think you would be.

ERIN
So what's up?

JOE
Well, I've been calling for days
and haven't been able to get you to
return my calls. I came by earlier
and you were out, so I thought I'd
catch you at a time you'd be home.
I just wanted to see what was
wrong.

ERIN
Nothing's wrong; I told you I'm
busy.

JOE
Too busy to return a phone call?
Is that all it is? You're just too
busy?

ERIN
No, I know I haven't been fair to
you. I'm having some trouble that
I'm trying to work out. You
haven't done anything wrong, and
I'm sorry I've ignored you.

JOE
So what is it? I want to help.

Erin looks away.

ERIN
You can't help.

JOE
You don't know that. No problem is
so bad that it can't be helped.

ERIN
I've tried to get help. It doesn't
work. I have to do this myself.

JOE
Erin, please, look at me. You
don't have to be by yourself. I'm
here for you.

Erin looks at him for a moment, then turns away again.

ERIN
That's nice of you, but I just
can't. You wouldn't understand.

Joe reaches out to Erin to make her face him.

JOE
You don't know that. Try me.

Erin pulls away.

ERIN
I said I can't. Let it go, OK?

JOE
So I'm supposed to forget you?
Forget about you and me?

ERIN
I didn't say that, but yes, for
now.

JOE
Erin, we're just getting started. I
really care about you. You don't
have feelings for me? I can't
believe this is all just my
imagination.

ERIN
It's the wrong time. It's not you,
honest. I do have feelings for
you. I know what I'm saying sounds
lame, but it's the truth. I wish
it wasn't.

JOE
I know there's more going on here.
You may not be willing to say it,
but I know we were falling in love.

Erin says nothing.

JOE
Look at me and tell me you don't
want to see me.

Erin turns to him, her face hard and vulnerable at the same
time.

ERIN
I don't want to see you now.

Erin looks away as the words leave her lips. She walks away
as she begins to break down and cry.

JOE
Erin...

Erin waves him off, covering her mouth and head bowed as she quickens her pace toward her front door. She fumbles with her keys, opens the lock, and rushes inside.

Joe stares at Erin as she walks off, unable to move.

CUT TO:

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

As she sobs miserably, Erin looks through her blinds to see Joe standing where she left him, frozen.

CUT TO:

EXT. ERIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Joe remains, holding out hope, when Erin's porch light goes out.

He waits a moment more, then accepts that he cannot sway her. He turns and walks to his car.

Joe sits down in the driver's seat, puts the key in the ignition, and starts the car.

Tears form in the dejected young man's eyes as he drives away.

CUT TO:

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Erin watches Joe drive away through the blinds. Once he's gone, she collapses on the floor in tears.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTHOUSE FILE ROOM - DAY

Dave enters the file room with two cups of Starbucks coffee, handing one to a bleary-eyed Bob. Bob, seated at a table with a stack of files, waves him off.

BOB

Thanks, man, but if I drink that now I won't be able to get any sleep. I have a tough enough time trying to sleep after the sun comes up.

DAVE

Sure. More for me; I need it. Anything?

BOB

Yeah. I went over all of them again, and one file popped out at me.

Bob opens a file folder for Dave to inspect.

DAVE

Morton, Alan. Shitbird and repeat wife beater. What stands out?

BOB

The rest of the files have only been looked at by the clerks, prosecutors, and a few of the P.D.s. See the tracking sheet?

Bob shows Dave a list of initials and dates.

DAVE

Yeah.

BOB

This one, and only this one, was also signed out by somebody with the initials E.F.

DAVE

Who is?

BOB

I don't know. Nobody here with a personnel roster, not yet. That's your job for the morning. I'm out of here. Give me eight hours then call me, OK? Let it ring.

DAVE

OK. Thanks a lot. Maybe we've got something.

BOB

I won't hold my breath. It's not one of the dead guys, and they do issue a lot of restraining orders. Worth a shot, though, seeing how little we got so far.

Dave follows Bob out of the windowless room into the hallway. As Bob walks off, Dave walks to a nearby water cooler and pours a paper cup of water. He downs the water and pours another.

Dave finishes his second cup of water and begins walking back to the file room. Rick Harvey rounds the corner, recognizes Dave, and approaches him. Halfway in the file room door, Dave recognizes Harvey too late to get away from the reporter.

HARVEY

Dave Bernard.

Dave turns to answer.

DAVE

Oh, hey Rick. How ya doing?

HARVEY

OK. Saw you on the news last night. You guys working the sniper case?

DAVE

Can't talk about it, Rick.

HARVEY

Of course you can't. Hey, I was going to get some coffee. You could probably use some. Want to join me?

DAVE

Actually, I have some here, thanks.

Dave motions to the table with two cups of coffee and the stack of files.

HARVEY

Got company?

DAVE

Uh, no, that was for my partner.

HARVEY

Is he around? Bob, right?

DAVE

Right. No, actually, he just went home.

HARVEY

OK, well, maybe next time. I'm going to the cafeteria to see what swill passes for coffee today.

DAVE
Hey, listen. I've got this extra
cup if you want it.

HARVEY
You sure?

DAVE
Yeah.

HARVEY
Great. Thanks very much.

Harvey takes the lid off and smells the hot coffee.

HARVEY
Don't know what I did before these
guys came along. Any luck with
that?

DAVE
The investigation? Like I said,
can't talk about it, Rick.

HARVEY
Of course not. To be honest, I'm
not sure this is one I want you
guys to catch. That sounds pretty
bad, doesn't it?

DAVE
No, not with what you've been
through. You've got a right.

HARVEY
No, you need to catch him. This
isn't the answer. Even I know
that. I just want the courts to
stop letting them out. Let them rot
in jail.

DAVE
Yeah, but that's after the damage
has already been done. We're off
the record, right?

HARVEY
Of course.

DAVE
This guy is getting them before
they kill. I understand his point.
It's arguably better than we do
sometimes, as you certainly know.

HARVEY

You making any headway?

DAVE

All right. Still off the record?

HARVEY

Yes. I'll tell you if I want to change the rules, OK?

DAVE

Well, I'd like to make lieutenant someday, you know, and all it takes is one bad call with one of you guys to end that. Besides, I can't walk in or out of the building these days without a bunch of you guys hounding me.

HARVEY

I don't work that way. Ask around.

DAVE

Fair enough. We're not getting far. We're looking at people with access to the files and military experience.

Dave points to the file Bob handed him earlier.

DAVE

We're coming up with nothing, just lawyers and clerks, none military. Ring any bells for you? Anybody I might have missed?

Dave has left the file open with the E.F. initials highlighted on the log where Harvey can see it. Harvey's eyes are drawn to Erin's initials but he tries to feign indifference.

HARVEY

No, not that I can think of.

DAVE

Well if you hear anything as you make the rounds, let me know, would you?

HARVEY

Sure thing, Dave. Listen, thanks a lot for the coffee.

(MORE)

HARVEY (cont'd)
And don't worry, you'll know when
I'm going to use you as a source.
You've got my word.

DAVE
Thanks, Rick.

Rick takes a long last sip of his coffee and moves toward the door.

HARVEY
I'll let you get back to work.

DAVE
Such as it is.

HARVEY
See ya around.

DAVE
Yeah, see ya.

Harvey pauses outside the file room, tosses his cup in a trash can, and heads toward Erin's office. He enters her workspace but she is not there. Harvey finds Judge Martinez's receptionist.

HARVEY
Excuse me, is Erin here?

RECEPTIONIST
Hi, Rick. No, she's off today.
Would you like to leave a message,
or could I help you with something?

HARVEY
No, thanks, I'll catch her later.

RECEPTIONIST
Sure.

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Harvey leaves the office and walks out of the building. Quickening his pace, he pulls his cell phone from his pocket and dials 411. An automated directory assistance system answers.

DIRECTORY ASSISTANCE
(O.C.)
What city, please?

HARVEY
Tucson.

DIRECTORY ASSISTANCE
(O.C.)
What listing, please?

HARVEY
Erin Fuentes.

DIRECTORY ASSISTANCE
(O.C.)
One moment, please. We can connect
you to the number for 35 cents. To
do so, please press "1" now.

Harvey presses the "1" button on his phone and checks his
watch.

The phone rings and is answered by the same automated
voicemail system Harris heard before. Harvey ends the call.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTHOUSE FILE ROOM - DAY

Alone with the files again, Dave picks up the Alan Morton
file and walks to find the records clerk who gave him the
files earlier. She sits at a desk as Dave found her before.

DAVE
Good morning.

CLERK
I think I saw you on TV last night.

DAVE
I keep hearing that.

CLERK
Your left side is really your best.

DAVE
Uh-huh.

CLERK
What can I do for you?

DAVE
I'm trying to track down some
initials. We found "E.F" on this
one but not on any of the others.
Do you know who that is?

CLERK

Let me see. That doesn't ring a bell for me. You're right, it's not someone who usually looks at the files, or I'd know the name. That's weird. Let me look on the computer.

DAVE

OK.

The clerk logs onto a computer terminal at the counter and begins looking through the court's master personnel list.

CLERK

I've got three E.F.s here. One is an Erik Farnsworth; he's a janitor, so there's no way he'd be in there. Another is a college intern, Erin Fuentes. Then there's a systems guy, Edward Franklin. He could conceivably have access, but I doubt it. Erin Fuentes is your best bet, though it's still a stretch; she's just a student.

Dave jots the name down in a small notebook he has pulled from his pocket.

DAVE

Erin with an "E" Fuentes?

CLERK

Yep. The name's a little Irish for a Latina, but who am I to judge?

DAVE

OK. Where's she work?

CLERK

She mostly works for Judge Martinez; she has a cubicle in room 224.

DAVE

Over on the other side of the building, right?

CLERK

Yeah. Close to Martinez' chambers.

DAVE

Great. Hey, you've been a big help. Thanks.

CLERK

No problem.

Dave begins to walk away, then turns back.

DAVE

Hey, wasn't Judge Martinez the one who issued the restraining order to Steven Petersen, the first sniper victim?

CLERK

I think so. It should be in his file. Why?

DAVE

Can I see the personnel folder for Erin Fuentes?

CLERK

It's not going to be much; she's an unpaid intern.

DAVE

That's OK. Can I see it please?

CUT TO:

EXT. ERIN'S HOME - DAY

Erin drives up and parks in front of her house. The late afternoon sun beating down on the house has made the black metal mailbox hanging by her front door oven hot. Erin scalds her finger as she pulls her mail from the mailbox; she sucks on the injured digit, fumbles for her keys in her purse, unlocks the door and lumbers inside.

Harris watches Erin through a pair of binoculars from his rental car down the street. He sweeps the binoculars away from the house to a pair of men sitting in the front seat of an appliance repair van who also take an interest in Erin's house. Harris lifts his cell phone and dials 411. The automated system answers.

DIRECTORY ASSISTANCE

(O.C.)

What city, please?

HARRIS

Tucson.

DIRECTORY ASSISTANCE

(O.C.)

What listing, please?

HARRIS
Rodeo Appliance Repair.

An operator comes on the line.

OPERATOR
(O.C.)
Sir, what was that listing again?

HARRIS
Rodeo Appliance Repair.

OPERATOR
(O.C.)
I'm sorry, we have no listing for
Rodeo Appliance Repair.

HARRIS
Anything close to that name?

OPERATOR
(O.C.)
No, I'm sorry, nothing like that.

HARRIS
Thank you very much.

Harris hangs up his phone, takes a bite of a sandwich, and keeps an eye on both the van and Erin's house.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ARIZONA DESERT - NIGHT

Erin dismounts her bicycle and walks gingerly forward through some brush. As the lights of a housing development illuminate Erin's face, she drops on all fours and crawls the last few yards, looking for a firing position that will support and conceal her as she takes her shot. She peers through binoculars to make sure she's correctly identified her target.

Satisfied with her position, Erin takes her backpack off and unzips it. She removes a heavy canvas cloth and sets it on the ground. Erin unrolls the cloth to reveal her disassembled rifle. She quickly and silently locks each piece together, finishing with the rifle scope.

Erin rolls the canvas back up to create a cushion to cradle and stabilize the rifle barrel. She places a magazine of ammunition on the cushion and lies prone behind the cushion and rifle to line up her shot through the scope.

Erin goes through her drill: she plants the rifle butt in the well of her shoulder, rests her cheek on the stock, and peers through the scope at a man seated in an armchair in his living room. Erin keeps her eye on her prospective quarry as she reaches for the ammunition.

The sole of a boot pins Erin's wrist to the canvas cushion as the rifle is yanked from her other hand. She cries out in surprise and pain. Troy Harris has managed to disarm her without any warning of his approach. Erin's former drill sergeant towers over her and holds the rifle at his side.

HARRIS

Fuentes, what the fuck do you think you're doing?

Erin tries to break free but can't.

ERIN

Leave me alone!

HARRIS

And if I do, what? You going to kill me? You going to run? No, I don't think so. We need to do some talking first.

ERIN

I don't have to talk to you; I don't work for you anymore.

HARRIS

Right; but since I've got the weapon of a murderer in my hands, I think you will talk to me, if for no other reason than old times' sake. Now what's all this about, Fuentes?

Harris releases Erin, who rolls over, sits down, and rubs her wrist.

ERIN

You have no idea; you couldn't understand.

HARRIS

No, I guess I can't understand taking the law into your own hands, murdering people, even if they are scumbags. We've got police to take care of them.

Erin stands up to face Harris. She dusts off her clothes.

ERIN

Well, they've done a fine job so far, haven't they? Just ask the women those men beat and killed.

HARRIS

That gives you no right...

ERIN

Who are you to tell me what rights I have? A fucking drill sergeant?

Harris brings the rifle up from his side and with one smooth motion jabs Erin in the stomach with the rifle butt.

Erin collapses, gasping for breath.

HARRIS

Even in combat we have rules, Erin.

Erin looks up from a crouch, wheezing but undefeated.

ERIN

Right! By the way, drill sergeant, ever been in combat? Ever shoot somebody?

HARRIS

No, I haven't.

ERIN

Well let me tell you, you prepared me very well for it. Maybe you heard about the medal I got. I have you to thank for it, really. You taught me how to kill people very well!

HARRIS

I didn't teach you to murder.

ERIN

Don't tell me about murder! The Iraqis I shot died just the same as these assholes. You made me, drill sergeant. What did you people think: we kill some people, we go home, and everybody forgets about it? You can't turn what you taught me off that easy. But now I decide who I shoot, not you.

HARRIS

I made you a soldier; a good one.
Soldiers are disciplined; they
don't just kill who they want.

ERIN

Really? That day in Iraq, I
decided who lived and died. I was
alone.

HARRIS

Yes, you did. As a non-
commissioned officer under orders
in a combat mission. Can't you see
that?

ERIN

Don't you remember what you told
me? You said that I had to stop
the enemy because if I didn't, he'd
kill my friends, right? That
wasn't about orders and combat
missions; it was about protecting
my own. That's all I did in Iraq,
just like you taught me. Orders
didn't mean shit to me at that
point; just stopping the bad guys
from killing us. And that's all
I'm doing now.

HARRIS

So the whole world is "your own"
now?

ERIN

No, just these women who are being
killed by men who are supposed to
love them.

HARRIS

And what about the law? You work
for a judge...

ERIN

Fuck the law! The law does nothing
for these women until they're dead.
What good is that? Huh?

Erin is bitter, exhausted, and confused, and talking about
the horrors she's held inside causes tears to stream from her
eyes as she breaks down.

ERIN

Fuck!

HARRIS

It's OK, Erin, it's OK now.
There's always a way to work things
out.

ERIN

How? Not after what I've done.
And don't think I'm coming with
you.

HARRIS

I hoped you would, but thought you
probably wouldn't.

ERIN

You armed?

HARRIS

I am now, but no, I didn't come
armed, and I'm not going to shoot
you. There's been enough of that.

ERIN

What then?

HARRIS

Like you said, you don't work for
me anymore, and I can't make you do
what I want. I just wanted to talk
to you, get you to end this before
anyone else gets hurt, especially
you. You need help. I haven't
been in combat, but I've seen what
people bring back. The smart ones
talk it out, get some help. I'm
sorry that didn't happen for you
earlier, but it's not too late. I
can arrange it for you. I know
some people...

ERIN

I've talked to plenty of Army
doctors, thanks. I'm done talking
to shrinks.

HARRIS

They're not all perfect. I
understand. But keep trying
different ones until you find one
who works for you. It's worth it.
I've seen it work.

ERIN

Don't worry about me. I'll be all right.

HARRIS

Don't be so sure. You can't go home. There are men waiting for you there. They've been watching you. And when I get back to town, I'm going to tell the cops what I know. I have to.

ERIN

I see. So how long do I have?

HARRIS

I figure about eight hours, maybe more, before I put everything together and get ahold of the right people. You should be able to get to Mexico by then.

ERIN

You'll do that?

HARRIS

Since you won't come in, yes; on one condition.

ERIN

What?

HARRIS

You stop the killing. Tonight. I don't care how right you are, how evil the men you hunt, it's wrong and in the end you'll destroy yourself. With help, maybe you can recover from this. But you have to stop now. You know you do. Look at yourself. You're falling apart.

ERIN

I just don't know...I'll try.

HARRIS

You were right, I did teach you how to kill. But I also taught you not to try, but to do. I know you can make this stop if you decide to. Now go.

ERIN

Yes. All right, I will.

HARRIS

Now go on, before I change my mind.

Erin stands, picks up and straps on her backpack, and leaves on her mountain bike. Harris watches her ride away, pulls a rag out of his pocket, wipes his prints off the rifle and magazine, and wraps them up in the canvas. He sets the bundle down, tears a small branch off a mesquite tree and obliterates his footprints as he walks back out of the desert the way he came.

CUT TO:

EXT. ARIZONA DESERT - DAWN

Erin buries her bicycle in the soft sand of a dry riverbed and walks toward an interstate highway. Lights of cars on the interstate shine in the distance.

Later, Erin walks down the side of the highway with her thumb out. A TRUCKER pulls over to offer her a ride.

TRUCKER

How far you going?

ERIN

Nogales or Douglas, whatever works.

TRUCKER

Come on. I'm going to Nogales.

ERIN

Thanks.

Erin gets in and the truck drives off.

CUT TO:

EXT. TUCSON STREET - DAY

Harris inserts coins in a pay phone in front of a Circle K convenience store at a busy Tucson intersection and dials a number.

POLICE OPERATOR

(O.C.)

Tucson Police Department. Can I help you?

HARRIS

I have information about the sniper shootings.

POLICE OPERATOR

(O.C.)

Sir, can you please stay on the line while I put you through to the detectives?

HARRIS

Yes, but make it quick.

POLICE OPERATOR

(O.C.)

OK, please stay on the line. Sir, this is detective Bernard. Go ahead.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Dave Bernard takes the call in his office. He scours his desk for something to write with.

DAVE

Sir, can I get your name, please?

HARRIS

(O.C.)

No you can't. Listen up. 250 meters east of San Jacinto Circle. You'll find the rifle there. The killings are over.

DAVE

Sir, thanks for that information. But how do you know it's over?

Harris hangs up the phone.

DAVE

Sir? Are you there? Did we get a caller ID on that?

CUT TO:

EXT. TUCSON STREET - DAY

Harris walks to a waiting cab in the parking lot of the Circle K.

HARRIS

(to DRIVER)

OK, let's get to the airport, now. Man, it's hot here.

The DRIVER puts the cab in gear and pulls into traffic and the blinding afternoon glare.

CUT TO:

EXT. MEXICAN CITY - LATE AFTERNOON

A beat-up pickup truck, one of many stuck in a post-siesta traffic jam, pulls out of traffic. Wearing the same clothes she wore in the encounter with Harris, Erin gets out of the bed of the truck, waves her thanks to the driver, and makes her way through a busy Mexican downtown district. Erin has all the possessions of her new life in the backpack slung over her shoulder.

Erin stops for tacos at a curbside stand; she pays the cashier and takes her dinner to a stand-up table. She unwraps the tacos, wolfs them down, and chases the food with a long tug on a beer. It's the first food Erin has eaten since the day before.

Her meal finished, Erin walks down the crowded street. A pair of uniformed policemen approach on foot from the opposite direction; Erin hastens to the door of a cheap hotel and ducks inside.

From the darkness of the lobby she watches the two policemen walk by without taking an interest in her or the hotel. Relieved, Erin turns and walks by the front desk of the hotel on her way to her room.

CUT TO:

EXT. ERIN'S HOUSE - EVENING

Joe rounds a corner in his car as he approaches Erin's house. He slows when he sees several police cruisers and TV news crews in front of the house.

Fearing Erin has been hurt, Joe pulls up to the house, gets out of his car, and runs toward Erin's door.

POLICEMEN

Two UNIFORMED OFFICERS stop Joe before he can reach the house. The senior, older of the two officers calls out,

OFFICER

Hold on! Where are you going?

JOE

What happened? Is Erin OK?

OFFICER
Let's sit down over here, sir.

The officers take Joe aside and have him sit on his car. The senior policeman is the only one who speaks to Joe.

JOE
Is she OK?

OFFICER
What's your name, sir?

JOE
Joe Jameson. Is she OK?

OFFICER
Mr. Jameson, how do you know Erin Fuentes?

JOE
Is she OK?

OFFICER
I don't know. She's not here. How do you know her, sir?

JOE
We've been dating...we broke up a few days ago.

OFFICER
And why were you coming by today?

JOE
I've been worried about her. I wanted to make sure she was OK.

OFFICER
Did she ask you to check up on her?

Joe looks the officer in the eyes.

JOE
What do you mean by that?

OFFICER
If you broke up, why were you coming to see her?

JOE
I wasn't stalking her, if that's what you're getting at.

OFFICER

Mr. Jameson, do you know where Ms. Fuentes might be?

JOE

No.

OFFICER

Did she say anything to you about planned trips out of town?

JOE

No. What's this about? What's going on?

OFFICER

Do you know where she was last night?

JOE

No. We hadn't seen each other in a while.

OFFICER

What were you doing last night?

JOE

I was at home. Look, I haven't done anything. I'm just trying to find Erin. Now if you suspect me of something, let me know and I'll get a lawyer, but otherwise I'd appreciate it if you'd tell me what's going on.

OFFICER

We've been trying to find Ms. Fuentes to talk to her about an investigation we're conducting. If you hear from her, we'd like you to call in.

The policeman hands Joe his card.

OFFICER

Thanks for your cooperation. You're free to go.

Joe walks off, bewildered. As he does, a female TV REPORTER sticks a microphone in his face. Her CAMERAMAN follows.

REPORTER

Excuse me, sir, could we talk to you for a moment?

Joe turns and walks away from the reporter. The reporter and the cameraman follow him.

JOE
What? No.

REPORTER
Do you know Erin Fuentes?

JOE
I don't want to talk to you.

REPORTER
Did the police say anything to you about the sniper murders she may have committed?

Joe stops and turns around.

JOE
What?

CUT TO:

INT. JUDGE MARTINEZ' CHAMBERS - EVENING

Dave Bernard and his partner Bob finish their conversation with Judge Martinez.

BOB
Again, your honor, if there's anything you can add about Ms. Fuentes, please feel free to contact us day or night.

MARTINEZ
Of course. Thank you, detectives.

DAVE
Good night, ma'am. Very sorry to bother you with this.

MARTINEZ
I'm sorry I couldn't have been of more help. Good night.

The two men leave, and Martinez shuts the door behind them. She walks to her desk, opens a file drawer, and produces a bottle of whiskey and a glass. Martinez pours herself a drink and takes a sip.

The judge walks around the desk, turns off the lights in her office, and walks to her window.

A small fleet of TV news vans is parked below, and reporters crowd the courthouse steps for their prized stand-up spots.

Martinez walks away from the window and settles into her desk chair with her drink in the dark. She drains it and pours another.

CUT TO:

INT. TUCSON AIRPORT - EVENING

Harris waits at his gate to board a plane back to Florida. He stares blankly out the window at the aircraft on the tarmac and the darkening red Arizona sunset.

GATE AGENT

(over P.A. system)

We're ready to begin pre-boarding flight 880 to Ft. Lauderdale. We'd like to ask those flying with very small children or those who just need help boarding to come to the front of the line at this time.

CUT TO:

INT. ERIN'S MEXICAN HOTEL ROOM - EVENING

Erin lies on the bed in her hotel room, exhausted but unable to sleep. The sound of the street -- car horns bleating out notes of a popular Mexican song, kids yelling at each other, a car radio played way too loud broadcasting a Mexican DJ's voice almost unintelligible with reverb -- pours through the open window.

She gets up, looks down at the activity on the packed street below, and closes the window. Erin notices a man look up at her; she backs away from the window and draws the blinds. She takes a swig from a bottle of whiskey out of hope for dreamless sleep.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRLINER - EVENING

Harris looks out his window at nothing as his airplane taxis on the runway before takeoff.

PILOT

(O.C. over P.A. system)

Flight attendants, arm doors for departure and prepare for takeoff.

CUT TO:

INT. ERIN'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Erin emerges from her bathroom in her bra and underwear. The rest of her clothes hang in the shower drying from a shampoo hand wash.

Erin dries her hair and sets a towel on her pillow. She turns on the TV to drown out the noise from the street and the squeaky ceiling fan over the bed. She lies down on the bed, closes her eyes, and tries to sleep.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRLINER - NIGHT

Harris dozes in his seat as a flight attendant walks past him with a food cart. The sound of the jet engines drowns out all other sound.

CUT TO:

INT. ERIN'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Erin wakes up with a start, sits bolt upright, and listens for the sound that woke her. She hears nothing above the din of the TV and the ceiling fan. She mutes the TV. Nothing.

Erin gets up from the bed and kills the fan to quiet the room. She looks out the peephole of her door, then opens the door a crack to see if there's anyone in the hall. Nothing. Erin turns off the TV and goes back to bed. Only the light through the blinds from the street illuminates her.

The ceiling fan still turns, winding down toward a stop. Erin stares up at the spinning blades, listening for the sound she swore she had heard. Was she dreaming? She finally closes her eyes.

The sound is back, this time louder. A man's voice, angry. A woman sobs through her pleas in Spanish for forgiveness and mercy. Erin opens her eyes with the recognition of the sound. The sound comes from the room above her. Erin lies perfectly still and listens hard. She hears a short muffled yelp from the woman as she is struck and a thud as the woman falls on the floor. Her cries grow louder.

Erin considers her options and potential consequences. She has decided. Erin rolls out of bed and strides to the door, opens it, and walks out into the hallway without stopping to close the door behind her.

FADE OUT